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MA ANANDAMAYEE

AMRIT VARTA

VOL.-9 JANUARY 2005 NO. 1

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MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

VOL.-9 January, 2005 No. 1

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The journal mainly publishes articles relating to Sri Ma. Other informative articles on religious literature and Saints and Teachers of any country or religion will also be welcome.

Writings from devotees about their own experiences, not entirely personal or private, throwing some light on Sri Ma's behavioural pattern with people who came close to her, are also specially invited.

All articles must be clearly written, preferably typed, on one side of the sheet only and sent directly to the Managing Editor.

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"Hari-Kathā hi Kathā aur sab vrithā Vyathā"

[To talk of God alone is worthwhile; all else is in vain and leads to pain]

—Ma Anandamayee

Jai Ma to all devotees of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee from the volunteers of **Ma Anandamayee Seva Samiti, Inc. (MASS, Inc.) U.S.A.**

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Jai Ma

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Ma standing in the Varanasi ashram compound in early fifties.

[Printed in the first issue of the Sangha journal "Ananda Varta" in January, 19

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MATRI VANI

All this, which is His creation is under His dispensation and in His presence and it is He.

In whatever state He keeps any one at a time --- it is all for the best, for verily everything is ordained by Him, is of Him.

Relative happiness, that is happiness depending on anything, must end in grief. It is man's duty to meditate on God—Who is Peace Itself. Without giving heed to that which aids the remembrance of God there can be no peace. Have you not seen what the world is? The One to be loved is God. In Him is everything — Him you must try to find.

* * *

Divine discontent arises spontaneously ---- it is the Divine that awakens it.

To lose all is to gain all. He is merciful and compassionate. Whatever He does at any time is all for the best, though certainly painful at the moment. When He manifests Himself as all-loss, there is hope that He may also manifest Himself as all gain. To pine for the One who helps towards the light of Truth is salutary, for it kindles the awareness of Truth.

Verily, He is everywhere at all times.

The endeavour, to awaken his real nature is man's duty as man.

* * *

Human birth — does it not ordinarily mean experiencing desire, passion, grief, suffering, old age, disease, happiness, pain and so on ? Yet, it is man's duty to bear in mind that he exists for God alone — for His service and for His realisation.

To say, "I don't know, I don't understand", is but ignorance. It is this veil that causes agony and misfortune.

* * *

In the field of his play there is both getting and losing. This is but the nature of its movement. Think of Him, who cannot be lost. Meditate on Him alone, on Him, the Fountain-of-goodness. Pray to Him; depend on Him. Try to give more time to His name and to His contemplation. Surrender your mind at His Feet. Endeavour to sustain japa and meditation without a break.

* * *

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All the 24 hours are to be spent in Quest of God *(Sādhan-Bhajan)*. The desire to find God has to be specially fostered. To be a human being means to place first and foremost the desire for Self-realisation. Except for the little time necessary for the service of the family, all the rest must be devoted to japa, meditation, the reading of scriptures, worship, prayer and self-dedication. Yearn and cry for Him for His own sake. If oppurtunity arises seek *Satsang*. Whenever this is not possible strive to keep *sadbhāvā* enshrined in your heart.

* * *

How can one be a human being without fortitude? To attain to Truth one has to endure all difficulties, ever abiding in patience. It is the obstacles that call forth patience.

* * *

Speak the truth to all. Secrecy, slyness and deception amount to cheating. They only taint the mind and set one floating on a sea of misery.

A truthful, pure and holy life tends towards joy and happiness supreme.

* * *

Ever to seek refuge at the Feet of the Lord is man's one and only duty. Try to engage in worship, the reading of sacred books, japa and meditation in the form that appeals to you most.

When the time is ripe God provides for everything. Try to be aware of Him in your heart.

* * *

Work with your hands and keep the name of your Lord *(Ishta)* in your mind. This will improve your work and it may also do good to your family.

To lead family life disregarding religious duty is to embark on an ocean of misery. If family life is sought, it must always be based on the dictates of religion and righteousness.

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH MA ANANDAMAYEE

[Translated from Bengali]

—Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka ashram, 17th August, 1939

Pramatha Babu : Ma, I want to ask you something ; Besides our mother who gave us birth, we are told to have another Mother who understands our joys and sorrows, to whom we can submit our unreasonable grievances, who puts up with our egotism and helps us in times of danger and distress -- does such a Mother really exist or not ?

Mataji : She does.

Pramatha: Then why is this Mother so unattached and devoid of affection ?

Mataji : In what way ?

Pramatha : Just now you were comforting someone with the remark that in family life one has to endure sorrow and bereavement. If someone lives among thorns he is bound to be scratched. What kind of a Mother is she who cannot save us from the scratches ?

Mataji : Don't you know ? You are also the parents of children. You let your children play games because you know this is good for them. While playing they sometimes hurt themselves falling down, or get covered with mud and dirt. But when you scrub and clean them they start crying loudly. Similarly when in your family life you suffer pain and sorrow, remember this is nothing else but your Mother cleaning you of dirt.

Pramatha : But do we understand this ? When the mother beats her children they know it is their mother who is beating them. This is why, even when they weep they are crying "Ma!"

Mataji : No, this is not correct. When children cry while being cleaned they resent the discomfort of it. Later they come to understand that their mother has given them trouble in order to rid them of dirt.

Having started on the simile of children's education, I can also point out that the mother does not entrust all things to her children in spite of loving them. She carefully puts away articles that are of value, otherwise they might be spoiled by her children. When the time is ripe the mother entrusts those things to her sons and

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daughters. So there is no cause for despair. Continue to perform your work. If you do not see quick results, remember your labour is not wasted. The Mother is preserving everything and at the right moment will hand it over to you.

Pramatha: So we can rely on the Mother?

Mataji: I assure, you can be entirely free from all anxiety. Just go on practising your japa or whatever other spiritual exercise you may have chosen.

Rajkumar: Why do you insist on *nama japa* or similar practices? Our worldly mother does not insist on anything for ensuring the well-being of her children.

Mataji : This Mother is somewhat different from your worldly mother. This Mother wants Her sons and daughters to develop all virtues. They should become endowed with Her qualities and become like Her. This is why She tells Her children to resort to the Name. Besides you can observe that the worldly mother also prevails on her children to take the trouble of studying well so that after education they may be able to look after their parents properly. But that Mother wants to mould Her children in her own image. She wishes to inculcate into Her children all Her virtues and qualities, so that these may be revealed to them by their own experience. For these reasons this Mother is somewhat different from the worldly mother."

At these words of confident assurance from Sri Ma everyone present appeared to be very much relieved. There was a look of joy in their eyes and faces. But how long would this wonderful feeling last ? We are not even aware of when the clouds of doubt and disbelief arise and darken our dimly lit horizon.

The time of our departure had come. Sri Ma said to Rajkumar : "Your way is now clear. With single-minded determination continue to tread this path".

Rajkumar : I wanted to take the spiritual path from the very beginning. It is you who induced me to get involved into family life with all its complications.

Mataji : Good -- to get a taste of life in the world has cleared the atmosphere. This is the peculiarity of having approached this body. Had you gone elsewhere many things would have remained hidden within you; but having come to this body everything has become revealed. This is for your good. Is it safe to keep snakes in your caverns ? Who knows when they may raise their hoods ? It is far better to extract these reptiles once for all and clear the road for further progress.

On listening to these words of Ma I recalled something that Pd. Gopinath Kaviraj* had told me. One day he was explaining to me the difference between

---

*. *Mahamahopadhyaya* Pd. Gopinath Kaviraj, M.A. D.Litt.,the renowned scholar-cum-Saint of Varanasi, a great *Sādhaka*.

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keeping company with someone beyond the range of the three *gunas (gunātita)* and a *mahatma* endowed with all the nobler qualities *(sattwa)*. He pointed out that in associating with such *mahatmas* one could get considerable help in one's sadhana, because by their *sāttvic* innfluence, one's evil tendencies are temporarily subdued, so much so that they don't seem to exist anymore. At that time it looks as if close proximity to these *mahatmas* has brought much success in one's *sadhana*. But these undesirable qualities have not been completely uprooted, though temporarily subdued, and in due course, given the opportunity, they will awaken once more. Whereas association with Sri Ma, who is beyond the three *gunas* has not at all this effect. The company of such an exalted Being does not stimulate the nobler or baser tendencies at all, because such a Being is completely beyond the attributes *(gunas)* of matter and so does not influence anyone by the qualities of *satṭva* (luminosity, harmony) or *rajas* (ceaseless activity and movement). Quite often it even appears as if there were not only no progress but rather retrogression. This is due to the fact that association with a being beyond the qualities or attributes *(gunas)* of matter brings to light and may even temporarily enhance suppressed tendencies and inclinations. They rise up with full force only to be destroyed for ever and by their annihilation noble qualities and inclinations are awakened and established for good. But at the early stage a dreadful experience has to be gone through by the *sadhaka*.

The above-mentioned words of Sri Sri Ma seemed to vindicate the substantive truth of Sri Gopinath Kaviraj's philosophy.

Dhaka, August 20th, 1939

This morning Ma was sitting on the veranda of the Smriti Mandir surrounded by devotees. Everyone was anxious to hear Ma talk, but nobody had any questions ready. At last Pramatha Babu requested : "Ma, please say something!"

Ma : What shall I say ?

Pramatha Babu : Whatever you have in mind.

Ma : That is the trouble, there is no mind here. (Turning to me) Baba, what whould I say ?

I : Whatever you feel inclined to.

Ma : Here, there is no inclination or disinclination.

I : Speak of something that will be of benefit to all of us. (Everybody laughs.)

Abhaya : At Azimgunge you spoke for three or four hours about *diksha*, *samadhi*, etc. Please repeat some of that !

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Ma : The reason for so much conversation there was that several people had asked various questions about their personal *sadhana*. This was their own individual affairs. Hence it cannot be given as general advice.

I : Please, tell us something concerning *diksha* (initiation). What exactly is *diksha* ?

Ma : Why do you study ?

I : To acquire knowledge.

Ma : So I say that just as after completing your studies you do professional work and thus reap the benefits of pension, so also there is a kind of pension to be enjoyed in this path.

I : When Sri Ram Thakur's disciples complained to him in their disappointment: "Baba, we are unable to repeat the Name properly, so what is to be done?" Thakur would reply: "Can the Name be repeated deliberately ? The Name comes about spontaneously. Even though you may not be doing anything, the Name is there automatically. If this were not so, what did I bestow on you ?" What is the purport of these words of Ram Thakur ? What precisely does the Guru give through *diksha* Even though we have no experience of it, yet a certain action is taking place within us. How is this possible?

Ma : What do you understand by *diksha* ?

I: I know nothing myself, I can only repeat what I have heard from revered Pd. Gopinath Kaviraj on this subject. He has said that *Sastras* connotes making a connection between the Supreme Power and the individual power of the disciple. If the disciple can be linked to the current of the Divine force, then the force of this current will one day or another lead the disciple to the Supreme Goal. Even if the aspirant makes no effort, the force of the current will gradually draw him towards God—there is no doubt about this. And if he regularly engages in spiritual exercises or worship, he will be able to progress much faster–it is just like swimming with the current.

Ma: All this is very true, completely true.

I: Very well. So there is no need for us to repeat God's name or do anything in this direction, for in any case we are bound to reach the Goal one day!

Ma: (laughing) But you want to get there quickly, you feel the urgency of it, don't you? So for this reason you will have to set to work.

Didi: While being carried along by the current, you may even be held up by some obstacle and come to a standstill.

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I: No, Didi, there is no fear of that. Ma has declared that once the mercy of a *Sadguru* has been achieved, there can be no more fall from Grace.

Ma: Yes, if a *Sadguru* has bestowed his Grace, how can there be danger of a fall? Some devotees are of the opinion, "since I have been blessed by the Grace of the *Sadguru*, why should I take the trouble to practise *sadhana?* The Guru will accomplish everything. So I can continue to enjoy my life". Again, someone else feels the intense urge to make quick progress, so he performs *japa* and meditation. There are so many different types. It is of course a fact that once the timber catches fire, it will in due course be reduced to ashes, *That seed* (of initiation) cannot be destroyed. When a seed is buried in the ground, in some cases the plant grows quickly and in other cases there may be delay. If the soil is well prepared beforehand the plant grows fast, but if not, it may be a slow process.

A devotee: Could not some of the seeds rot in the ground ?

Ma : Yes, a few seeds may also become rotten in the ground. But even this does not render them useless. After rotting they remain in the soil as fertilizers. Nothing is wasted.

It may happen that some people receive the *Sadguru's* grace at an early age but for many years are not interested in the spiritual path. Eventually, in old age devotion for God awakens in them. For others nothing may be achieved during the present birth, but in a subsequent birth there may be fulfilment. Is it not said that after leaving the body one has to return and live in another body? This world is a continuous coming and going. Here there is only birth, death and rebirth. But it may also happen that after leaving the body one may never have to return again. For once the fire of Knowledge is kindled it can reduce everything to ashes within a split second. Thereafter there is no more coming and going.

I : Ma, it is believed that in order to exhaust one's *karma* (results of former actions) one has to take on a body. Can *karma* not be exhausted without assuming another body?

Ma : Even when the physical body dies, there are other subtle bodies.

I : Then is it possible to work out one's *karma* in an etherial body ?

Ma : There are quite a lot of *karmas* for which a physical body is needed, so one has to be reborn in a new body. But there are other *karmas* that can be worked out in a subtle body. The ONE is constantly leading human beings towards Himself. Everyone will at sometime or other reach the Supreme Goal because this is man's destiny. To become established in his own true Being is man's inherent tendency (*sams kāra*).

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I : Ma, by *samskāra* we usually understand the results that will ensue due to one's previous actions. Has a human being the capacity to perform actions that will enable him to attain to the Supreme *Brahman* or the Supreme Goal.

Ma : This is why it is said that it is the Guru who out of His Grace leads to that Goal. It is impossible to achieve merely by one's own actions.

I: When you speak of becoming established in one's true Being, this seems to be the ultimate state reached by *sadhana*. But one also hears of states of existence such as *Sivaloka* or *Visnuloka*, etc., which the power instilled by the Guru into the disciple may subsequently enable him to attain, but beyond which the disciple cannot proceed. So how can it be that everybody is able to reach the Supreme Goal, which is to be established in one's own Self ?

Ma : What you say is also true. Frequently it is seen that human beings become arrested on particular levels. But if a person has the inborn tendency, he may after temporary confinement at some level, proceed higher up. Others may spend ages after ages in the same state. There are so many possibilities. Is there an end to this subject ?

Pramatha : I don't understand all these bickerings over knowledge and world after death. I just want to make sure that since you are here as our Mother, do we have to acquire all this knowledge to know you ?

Ma : You are a practising lawyer, do you do your work without having studied law ?

Pramatha : By what kind of studies have you yourself acquired all this wisdom ?

Ma : Leave aside the question of this body.

Abhaya: You are so great that one cannot compare anyone with you.

Ma : I do not ask you to leave aside the question of this body. You can even ask this body "to go to hell". (Everybody bursts into loud laughter). Do you not frequently call someone an "idiot"? You can ignore this body as an idiot. (Again loud laughter).

Pramatha : This is not what I mean. I must repeat that I want to realize Ma. Now, do I have to acquire all this knowledge in order to realize Ma or will I automatically obtain all this knowledge by realizing who Ma is ?

Ma : By realizing Ma you will have gained everything. Did I not say only the other day that the mother wishes to give everything to her children. It is the mother's sole desire that whatever she possesses should belong to her children.

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Pramatha : Indeed, this is very heartening news. I understand this quite well. But Ma, do you know what happens to me when I listen to all these people discussing abstruse matters? I start suspecting my own feelings. I imagine these people have stolen away everything and I have been cheated. (Laughter)

Ma : (Laughing) Listen, even though the Goal is the same, the paths taken by different people are of great variety. Some choose the path of knowledge, discriminating : 'Not this, not this ; (*neti, neti*); others tread the path of devotion and yet others of dedicated action. But the objective is the same.

Pramatha : I do not relish all these questions.

Ma : When one starts studying and gains a little knowledge, questions are bound to arise. Questions multiply in proportion to the increase of one's knowledge. On the other hand he who has never touched a book does not gain any knowledge nor do any questions occur to him. There is yet another category of individuals who have no problems and therefore no questions.

Pramatha: So it seems that I belong to this category. (Everybody laughs)

Ma : (laughing) This is quite obvious. (Laughter again) But they do not harbour any suspicion that they have been cheated.

Pramatha : So, in order to realize Ma, we cannot evade all this knowledge?

Ma : See, have I not pointed out a moment ago that it is the natural disposition of the human being to become aware of the treasure hidden within himself ? The true nature of man is to move in this direction. In this natural process he cannot avoid anything. You may have observed the natural flow of water : If water is poured out it starts flowing. Should there be a hole on the way, so long as the hole is not filled entirely, the water cannot flow any further; but as soon as the hole is full, the water resumes its course. Similarly, the individual quite naturally moves towards peace and tranquility. Along the way he cannot avoid anything that happens to be there, so nothing remains unknown to him. That is why I repeat : set to work. Effort is a necessity. Nevertheless attainment does not ensue due to one's own exertion. By His mercy alone everything becomes possible.

[To continue]

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THE FIRST MEETING.....

—A European devotee

It was in 1971, and I was living at Sri Ramanashram, Tiruvennamalai. One day I was visiting the room of an American couple I knew and they said they had been to Calcutta and had met a lady saint who had impressed them much. They showed me a photo of an elderly lady — but it looked to me just that — a photo of an elderly lady. The thought of a lady saint was a strange one at that time and I was not interested.

Then some months later we got the news that Ma Anandamayi, who was the lady they had met, was coming south to Madras for the first time in 20 years — as generally she was always travelling in the North of India. I then thought that if I should meet her I should at least find out something about her. Accordingly, I called on Mrs. Talyarkhan, a Parsi lady who lived near the ashram and was a devotee of her, as I was informed. She showed me a slim picture album about the lady, and I took it back to my room to study it. I was perusing this booklet when I found as I looked at it that one of the photos became alive, as it were. One could feel such a living energy emanating from it — and this affected me deeply. I had never seen a photo that had this effect before.

From that time I could hardly wait for her to come. Everyday I was counting the days of her arrival - 58, 57, 56 ..... If the reader has ever been sent off to boarding school then they may know how the young children count the days until they can be home again. It was inexplicably like that.

Finally the day in January came. There was a group of foreigners staying at Sri Ramanashram and may be a dozen of us set off by bus for Madras. Anandamayi Ma was staying for 3 days in a little-purpose-built cottage in the grounds of the large house of Smt. M. S. Subhalakshmi and her husband Sri. Sadasivan. When we reached the place a crowd had already gathered. We walked down a slope towards the people, all in white, and I wondered if Ma would stand out in any way. Even at a distance my eyes were drawn to a figure sitting on a couch, dressed in white, with black hair. As we approached I could see she was sitting sideways

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looking to the left of the crowd, motionless. She did not appear to be looking at anybody there, she was just looking ahead of her. After a short while I found myself moving round to the side of the people so I could see directly towards her face. I found my body to start shaking for no reason. Luckily there was a railing on the side of the building, and I held onto it, shaking. It was all a mystery to me. After some time the darshan was over and Ma retired from sight.

Our group left for our hotels. But that night I could not sleep at all. I was just lying in a completely peaceful alert state. The next day we returned to the cottage and had a place right in the front near Ma's couch. Being January it was cool with a brilliant blue sky and the sun was glinting on the ponds of the palm trees. Pushpadi and some other ashram girls were singing such beautiful kirtan, it was like a paradise.

After some time Sri Ma came out and took her place. The kirtan went on and waves of emotion were coming from within me, from where I did not know, nor why — but it was hard to contain. After the darshan was over because we were known to Mrs. Talyarkhan, and because she was organising Ma's tour, she arranged for our group to meet Ma privately afterwards. Ma was sitting in a pandal at the back of the cottage and one by one we could do our pranams to her. Having been familiar with Ramana Maharshi's way of looking into one's eye I was hoping such a thing might happen. I looked at Ma as I knelt at her feet but her eyes were looking here, there .... then gradually she brought them down and our eyes just met, touched and hers were away again.

After the *darshan* we were given lunch in the palatial mansion of M.S. Subhalakshmi and her husband.

I forget all the details of the following satsangs while Ma was in Madras, but what sticks in my memory is that Ma was in *Mauna*. She would write on her or another's hand palm to indicate what she wanted to say. M. S. Subhalakshmi and her daughter Radha sang several times - and those who know of her and her devotion can imagine how beautiful her renditions were as she sat at Sri Ma's feet. Ma herself sang, notably - *"Hey Bhagavan"*, possibly, I thought through the unseen influence of the many devotees of Ramana Maharshi, who were there.

The following day, I think, it was time for Ma to take the train to Trivandrum, where she was to attend the function at the request of the Travancore Maharaja. We

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gathered at the station to see her off. It was so touching to see M. S. Subhalakshmi press her hands to her heart and then towards Ma, and Ma (in *mauna*) responding in the same way. Ma was sitting cross legged on her seat and as the train picked up speed I ran with it and saw her tiny feet as she put them on the ground with the people gone.

The effects of this visit to see Ma took some time to digest, as it had brought on me a considerable inner upheaval. But already I was planning, when could I next see her .... ?

"If you engage yourself in ceaseless, uninterrupted service directed to Him, then only by His mercy the waters of the Ganga of Knowledge will wash away all your desires and doubts and only then will you "be at peace."

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CONVERSATION WITH SWAMI VIJAYANANDA

[Three]

Q. What is the influence of food on *sadhana ?*

A. The way we eat has a long influence on our mind *(jaisa anna taisa mann)* what we eat and how we eat, it can be of help (if *sattwic)* or an obstacle to *sadhana* (like meat). In this field like in many others, it is good to find a balance. Both asceticism and excess are to be avoided. Moderation is the ideal. One should treat the body with respect, but without identifying oneself to it, like a horserider treats his horse.

It happens to many *sadhakas* to look for some pleasure in food, since they do not allow themselves any other worldly pleasure. That might go on until the *sadhaka* finds real joy in meditation; then he will feel no attraction towards such external and transient pleasures. While trying to keep a balance with *sattvic* food taken in moderate quantity, (giving the body what it needs, not less and not more), one should remember that what someone eats is not as important as how much sincere compassion and love this person gives !

Q.- What do you mean when you speak about the ability to control one's own mind ?

A.- It is the ability to stop one's thoughts at will, to keep the mind silent when it is not necessary to use it. It enables one to dominate desires, fears, instincts and impulses; then reason controls passion. This discipline of self-control makes the difference between any strong person and weak person, and it enables a *sadhaka* to make rapid progress. When the mind is under control, we see that no problem really exists. Problems are only in the mind ! We don't have problems when we are in deep dreamless sleep; in that state the world doesn't exist. In a similar way, when we control our thoughts and emotions, we become free from the illusions and negative beliefs that veil reality, and we get in touch with our real nature, which is the Divine itself.

This is why spiritual practice consists of acquiring control over the mind and purifying it, so that our real Self can be unveiled and shine.

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Q.- How should we deal with *Kundalini ?*

A. The main rule about *Kundalini* is never to force anything, in any way. An awakening of this force should happen only with the close supervision of a *Satguru* (a fully realised Sage). Any opening of the *nadis* (first step to the awakening of the *Kundalini)* should happen only when the *sadhaka* has an excellent self-control (mainly over sexual desire and anger). The *Satguru* puts the disciple to the test to see if he (or she) can resist under the pressure of the enormous - and dangerous - intensity that comes with *Kundalini.*
So one should never *do* anything about it, just let the *Satguru* take care of it, while getting ready by leading a pure life (including strict celibacy) and learning to control the mind. Before reaching that stage or before having a close relationship with a *Satguru,* the way of *karmayoga* is the best, since it can be practised anywhere and under any circumstances.

Q.- What is *karmayoga* exactly ?

A.- It has to be distinguished from *seva*, which is unselfish service and can be a preparation to *karmayoga.* Real *karmayoga* is a mental attitude to be kept in all circumstances, in every activity. Ego's root is the wrong belief that "I am the doer and I enjoy the fruit of my actions", so ego loses its power if you keep aware that you really are just an instrument for the Divine, and if you simply do your own duty without caring for the results. If success comes it is fine, and in case of failure it is fine as well.

Little by little, you get a clear perception of the fact that you really are a tool for the work of the *Absolute,* and everything happens in a spontaneous way. You have less and less expectations and attachments.

Body, mind and emotions are a whole. There are no thoughts without emotion or without at least some kind of attraction or repulsion. A sage like Ma Anandamoyi has no thought and no emotion, being pure compassion and pure awareness, and identifying with people in order to communicate with them in a "normal" way.

Q.- What is it like to be Self-realized ?

A.- No "I" is there anymore, only pure Consciousness-Bliss.

In order to describe the ultimate stage to enlightenment - called *sahaja samadhi,* which he had reached, Ramdas used to say about himself that he is like the Ganga: although he had reached the Ocean (the Absolute), he went on flowing towards the Ocean (living in the world), while being

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always aware simultaneously of both levels and of their Unity. A perfect Sage cannot be said to be "be happy", since he is Supreme Happiness. He sees that the waves of duality (the world) are made of the same salty water as the perfectly still water of deep Ocean (Bliss of Unity). The only difference is the movement. The perfect Sage sees that everything is Consciousness, beyond all the pairs of opposite like good and evil, praise and blame, pain and pleasure etc.

He sees that movement also is divine, and he knows that the movement will take everything away, so he does not try to keep anything nor anybody. He is without attachment or expectations; in this freedom genuine Love can be.

Q.- Would you please explain more about these two levels (duality of the world and Bliss of Unity) ?

A. - The Divine Supreme is *Sat-Chit-Ananda,* meaning Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, and it is also the essence of each person. In the world we see its reflection as *Asti-Bhati-Priyo*, which means, it is-it shines-it is attractive. This reflection (the sense pleasures etc.) is only an illusion, but it seems real because it is based on the Absolute. It has its force, that is why it is so difficult to resist its temptations ! The key is discrimination, which means to see that real Bliss is inside of ourselves, and the objects outside are disappointing and do not bring real joy, being only the result of a mirror effect.

Q.- Why do we lie so much to ourselves and consequently also to others ?

A.- One of the laws of the creation, like also physics laws as gravity etc., is the law of harmony (called *Rita*). *Rita* is such that people cannot do anything "bad" without being in some way convinced that it is the right thing to do. That is why the mind finds all kinds of excuses, rationalizations and justifications when we go out of the way of *Dharma.* Thus, thinking that it is the right action, we can commit evil deeds while feeling in harmony with ourselves. The inner Self (the Divine) gives the choice between listening to the voice of *Dharma* or to the lying mind; but after a "bad action" the voice of the inner Self will manifest itself with remorse and a bad conscience, so that we can repair what can be repaired, and avoid making the same mistake again.

Rita is the law that explains why it is not possible for evil forces to win in the end: the final victory necessarily belongs to good forces; just like in the World Wars.

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Q.- What are the main mistakes that can lead a *sadhaka* to lose the spiritual power gained in meditation ?

A.- The first main temptation to use this spiritual power in a way that will not allow any more spiritual progress is using the power to heal. Instead of it, one should only use compassion or repeat a mantra to help people who suffer, but one should never do anything voluntarily in order to heal anybody (apart from taking him to the doctor !). The second one is yielding to the desire to use spiritual power (and the charisma that often comes with regular meditation) in order to gain power over people, to gain money, or wasting the spiritual energy in sexual relationships.

The third one is the temptation to become famous or to be a *guru.* It is dangerous, because before achieving complete self-realization a *guru* is like a blind man leading another blind man: both might fall ... And after liberation the sage does not have any desire to become-a *guru;* his mere presence and his example make him naturally a *Sadguru.*

When confronted with these temptations, the *sadhaka* should just be indifferent, not interested in nor afraid of these worldly uses of spiritual power. So he can go on his path, and when he will attain the Goal he will have spontaneously a positive, healing and purifying influence on the people around him.

Q.- How should I deal with the *"sattvic ego"*, the part of ego that is so proud of following a spiritual discipline, and often thinks to be more advanced and pure than most other people ?

A.- First of all, remember that it is precisely this *sattvic* ego that does the *sadhana,* and that we need it, because he is the one who makes the efforts towards Self-realization ! So let it be, but keep aware of it, and be careful about excessive pride that could lead to a fall. Later, when you are ready, the *Sadguru* only will be able to eliminate this *sattvic* ego (which is only illusion !). That is the message of the story about the bandits' chief that becomes chief of the police: he will arrest all bandits except for himself.....so at that point the intervention of a *Sadguru* is necessary.

Ego is like the driver of a car, the car being the body and mind. When self-realization occurs, there is no need for a driver anymore, one becomes a pure canal for the Divine.

[To continue]

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JAI MA

—Dhiraj Sapru

... know this entire 'existence', my dear, in it's totality, or should we say. "The very "Concept - of - Existence", when viewed from, nay, through the 'mundane-eye', to be but relative existence....

tell me, my dear, what is "THAT" which is dearest to man ? - in the absence of "WHICH" he ceases to function in his optimum-potentiality ? - for "WHICH" he is willing to walk to the very end of the universe ? - "WHICH" for, he will readily kill, nay, die ?

Tell me - tell me, mate ..... meditate on it though first .... calmly....

..... it is "FREEDOM" that is dearest to mankind, nay, sentient beings ....

yet again, when viewed through the 'mundane-eye', freedom, or should we say, 'The very "Concept-of-Freedom", is but mere relative freedom.....

..... you have the freedom to buy yourself a lovely ashram today—for you have the money ... however, your money much as you may have-will last not forever ...

.. you have the freedom to compose and sing the most heart-touching love song today-for joy brims your very being .... however, your joy - pure as it may be-will last not (constantly) forever ....

... you have the freedom to swim in a beautiful, clean-clear-calm lake, on a superb summer morn-for it is your will...however, your will-strong as it may pose up front today - will last not forever, (in-as-much-as it shall unquestionably shrink-frozen on a astoundingly crisp 'n' fresh winter morn)....

... you have the freedom to jam-your-toast to munch away-for it is your taste-and of course jam-toast-hunger are prerequisites.... however, your taste (for jam-toast) will last not forever, (and for that matter, neither jam; toast; nor hunger, will)....

... you have the freedom to think - write - speak, "this" or "that" in accordance with your mood ... however, my dearest, moods last not-they're fluxing - away - forever ....

... yet, away and above all such
relative - limited - freedom,
there exists
Supreme - Unbound- Freedom

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a state-of perfect-stillness...
a state of
'no doubt' - 'no becoming'
'no coming' - 'no going'
'no grasping' - 'no averting'
'no being' - 'no ceasing'

... however, O fair one, "IT" cannot be spoken about - for IT flees the grip of words (as an absolute testamony of IT's nature); "IT" cannot be explained- for IT halts thought; "IT" most certainly cannot be understood-for it transcends all understanding; "IT" cannot be conceptualized -for IT aint no concept ...
all one can say about "IT", is that, "IT IS"
realize it ...

jai ma

MA'S *MAHASAMADHI*

—Antonio Eduardo Dagnino

By that mystic circle where Sati - unburnt - continues to sing to her-husband;
At the very spot where Shiva forgot himself
Like any mad, heartbroken, adoring human being;
Next to the Ganga's purifying, fertilizing swing
Out of the turquoise foot-hills and the royal blue peaks....
I know a tomb that speaks:

There, superconscious, free, fully at ease
In a subtle body formed of awareness and peace
Anandamayi, the Mother of Delight,
Dispenses her deep silence, her sweet light
And her profound insight.

Secretly, sublimely, convertly,
Furtively, beautifully, lovingly,
She understands, comprehends, elucidates,
Reciprocates, infuses, communicates,
Emanates, mutates and emancipates !

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THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[Continued from before]

—Sri P. C. Mehta

The primitive stage of Hinayana Buddhism:

The main features of primitive Buddhism are summarized hereunder:

'Atman' and *'Siddha Paramesthin'* during Buddha's time:

We have seen that *'Brahman'* means the eternal principle behind the universe as a whole and *'Atman'* is the inmost essence of one's own self. Passages descriptive of *Brahman* alone or *Atman* alone occur frequently in the earlier literature as well as in the Upanishads. The essential teaching of the Upanishads is the identification of *Atman* with *Brahman.*

It is claimed that in the early Vedic period, man was regarded as distinct from the permanent divine principle which was his substratum. Upanishads transformed this view by identifying this permanent divine principle called *Atman* as the real man and identifying it with *Brahman.*

We have seen that the original Vedic view held out the attainment of heavenly happiness (without the possibility of rebirth), as the final goal of man's earthly life. *'Mukti'* was supposed to come gradually after death. This was called *'Krama-mukti'* i.e. the progressive realization of release or *'Moksa'*. During life, man's actions had to be in conformity with *'dharma'* so that they could lead him to heaven on death.

The way to this was by following the path of *'Dharma'*, which includes the following: i) living a strictly moral life, ii) leading the *'pravritti'* *i.* e. activist way of life as taught in the Brahmanas, iii) worshipping the gods, thus emphasizing the rituals.

We have also noted that the Upanishads on the other hand declare that 'liberation in the final sense while still alive', was possible.

It is claimed that Buddha being brought up in the environment of early Vedic period, did not start by thinking in terms of total identification of *'Atman'* with *'Brahman'* and therefore needing nothing more than being awakened in his true identity. As we saw, Jainism is an old religion while the Jaina Tirthankara Vardhaman Mahavira was contemporary of Buddha. Without believing in a creator,

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Jainism believes in the divinity of every soul and every soul's capacity to become *'Siddha Paramesthin'* i.e. to come to enlightenment.

As such in Buddha's spiritual unfolding, the Jaina influence could have played some part also. Thus Buddha regarded *'Atman'* as the God-in-man, (which was neither body, emotions nor mind, but spirit or Self of man) which was hidden under the layers of *karma*, desires and *'Tanha-Jal'* i.e. the network of cravings or graspings.

This meant that to come to enlightenment, man had to remove either positively or negatively, the veils covering his true identity, symbolized in the *'Mani-Padma-hum'* or 'I am the Jewel in the Lotus'. In later *Mahayana Buddhism,* in the two schools of *'Vijnānavāda'* and *'Madhyamika'*, a major role is played by the difference in the concepts, whether for enlightenment one has to remove the coverings on the 'Spirit' (either positively or negatively); or one has to be awakened to his true identity.

These coverings with which man has identified himself, constitute the lower-self or personality of man, through which he acts or responds to the challenges of life. The tendencies of this lower-self which hides the 'Spirit', persists here as well as hereafter, and transmigrates.

There is an innate urge in man to realize his real Self. His foremost task in life accordingly is to extinguish or 'waning out' of his lower-self and thereby realize his real Self, which being ineffable is described as *'Sunya'*. When Buddha talks about extinguishing the self to reach *'Nibbana'*, he is talking about putting an end to the lower self.

Early Buddhism is thus a doctrine of mature wisdom, as it points out a way to end suffering and gain abiding peace and happiness.

'Maya' in Primitive Buddhism :

Dealing with Vedic philosophy, we saw that *'Maya'* is the power or the principle that conceals from us the true character of reality. Buddhism agrees with this view.

The ignorance may be regarded as a) negative, that is merely a lack of insight: or it may be looked upon as b) positive, in the sense that it gives rise to a misapprehension, making us see diversity where there is only the unity of Brahman.

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The goal of life in Primitive Buddhism :

The goal of life, as conceived in the Upanishads and which, though couched in different terms, is the same in Buddhism. It is to overcome this congenital ignorance, by attaining full enlightenment or *'Jnana'*. Thereby, the Upanisads claim that one realizes the unity of *Atman* with *Brahman,* while Buddhism asserts that thereby one extinguishes the lower self and reaches *'Nibbana'*.

The enlightened state is called release or *'Nibbana'* (*'Moksa'* in Hinduism), which is release from the empirical state of *'Sansāra'*. Buddha states thus *'Bhava-nirodha-nibbanam'* i.e. that which puts an end to the recurrent round of birth, death and rebirth is *'Nibbana'*. It is reaching the abiding state behind flux which is attaining one's true selfhood in *Brahman* or *Nibbana.*

This enlightenment is not an intellectual apprehension, but actual realization of that unity. The attainment of it involves discipline of the right kind with impeccable moral life. Buddhism holds the same view.

The lower-self which is the ignorance covering the ineffable *'Sunya'*, has to be extinguished or removed either positively or negatively.

The positive way :

i) to come to enlightenment, man has to positvely remove the layers concealing his true identity or

ii) the 'Spirit', which is self-evolving, and which is in the form of a bud with a teleological urge to grow into self-awareness, aids the process through positive action.

In either case the result is achieved through Yogic course of discipline, the steps for which are the same as mentioned under Upanisadic and Yogic practices.

The negative way :

To come to enlightenment, man has not to do any positive act for eliminating the ego, but to let go the lower self and thereby drop the veil of ignorance which prevents discovering one's identity, because it is the individual will which keeps it held together.

Therefore, the way does not lie in effort at removal of the coverings, but in dropping the desires, graspings and cravings or letting go the mischief maker which is *'Tanha'*. The moment this is done, man naturally arrives at his own true Self.

Liberation as per Upanisads and Primitive Buddhism :

As regards the means to liberation, the teachings of the Upanisads and Buddhism are nearly the same. Both have within them the positive as well as the

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negative approach. In their unfolding the positive and the negative schools, develop divergent methodologies.

Positive approach during primitive Buddhism :

For primitive Buddhism, the positive approach is more relevant. The positive approach is more directed towards the right exercise of the will to eradicate *'Avijja'*.

It means eradicating the undersirable coverings from the 'Spirit' or helping the self-evolving spiritual bud to grow into a morally perfect entity. In either view, this is possible through complete development of the higher qualities which would overcome the tyranny of the lower. It is the province of yoga, along with *dharma* or *'sila'* meaning moral rectitude, leading to *'samadhi'*.

Buddha places great emphasis, on *dharma* in its ethical sense. It is described as 'The lamp of life' and signifies perfect conduct or godly living. A person who suceeds in breaking through this circle of *'sansāra'*, it is claimed, can attain *'Nirvana'* in the present life.

Negative approach :

By the time of the systems, the negative approach came to prevail in Buddhism. It is claimed that as a result Buddhism became thoroughly monastic in character.

Buddhism and the Upanisadic Doctrine :

Early Buddhism differs from the Upanisadic doctrines on the following points.

i) We have seen that the Upanisadic doctrine was intended for the select few. Buddha's teachings were intensely practical being limited only to what was necessary for overcoming evil. For this reason his philosophy is called pragmatic. It deals with the hard facts of life. It is not theoretical. In so far as it excludes whatever was not positively known, it is positivistic. As such his teachings were open to all, thus giving rise to a general uplift of great consequence. However his teachings did have an esoteric counterpart. Buddha knew more as is clear from the following episode. Once when sitting under a simsupa tree, Buddha took a few of its leaves on his hand and asked his disciples that had assembled there to tell him whether they were all the leaves or whether there were more on the tree. When they replied that there were surely many more, he said : 'As surely do I know more than what I have told you'. He did not dwell upon all that he knew, since he saw no practical utility in doing so. 'philosophy purifies none, he said, 'peace alone does'.

Madam Blavatsky, in her 'Secret Doctrine' says, 'Not to divulge to the unworthy the Sacred Esoteric Literature, Gautam Buddha who was a Hindu reformer limited his public teachings to the purely moral and physiological aspect of the Wisdom-Religion, to Ethics and Man alone.

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'Buddhism has the same esoteric teachings as those of the Brahmins. Buddha being a *kshatriya* Hindu and a disciple of Brahmins, his secret doctrine did not differ from the teachings of the initiated Brahmins of his day. The whole Buddhist reform consisted of nothing more than giving out a portion of that secret teachings which was available only to the temple-initiates and ascetics. Though his philosophy was built upon the true esoteric knowledge, because of his pledges, He gave to the world its outward material body and kept its soul for the Elect. -------.'

'Things' unseen and incorporeal', the mystery of Being outside our terrestrial sphere, he left entirely untouched in his public lectures, reserving the hidden Truths for a select circle of his Arhats. The latter received their initiation at the famous Saptaparna cave (the Sattapanni of Mahavamsa) near Mount Baibhar (the Vihara of Pali Mss). This cave was in Rajagriha, the ancient capital of Magadha and was the Cheta cave of Fa-hian, as rightly suspected by some archaeologists. It was first discovered by Mr. Beglor who was the chief engineer and archaeologist at Bodh Gaya.'

ii) While a part of Brahmanism relied on the instruction or help of others, such as a preceptor or grace of God, Buddhism laid stress on self-reliance and self-effort. This adage points to the further fact that all the help may not come to fruition till man acquires, not mediate, but immediate understanding. In the *Maha-parinibbana Sutta* it is said, 'Therefore, O Ananda, be ye a lamp unto yourself. Be ye a refuge to yourself. Betake yourself to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth..... Then it continues and says that whosoever shall be a lamp unto himself holding fast to the Truth, without taking external refuge, shall reach the summit.

iii) The Upanisads maintain that because the Self is eternal, it is blissful. The important postulate of Buddhism is that what is temporal or changing is sorrow. *Chandogya Upanisad* says, 'Happiness lies only in the infinite : there is no happiness in the finite.' In one of the dialogues recorded in the *Majjhima Nikaya* (iii. 19), Buddha says, 'And that which is ephemeral, O monks, is it painful or pleasant ? Painful'. To Buddha's outcry—'Sarvam dukkham' i.e. all is suffering, 'Oldenberg says, 'All the waters of all the seas are not to be compared with the flood of tears which has flowed since the universe first was'. Thus Buddha's philosophy though pessimistic, is not a creed of despair, because it admits of the possibility of attaining peace here and now.'

iv) The Upanisads considered that there was a permanent essence of man which they called *'Atman'* which is identical with *'Brahman'*, the fundamental substratum of all creation. Early Pali scriptures hold that neither a permanent essence of man

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nor an enduring principle behind phenomena can be found. Everything was changing phenomena and therefore sorrow and therefore non-self. Hence the ontological view of Buddhism in contrast to that of the Upanisads is that there are only momentary passing qualities which we should regard as new existences and no unchanging substance behind.

Buddhistic doctrine denies soul or self as a stable entity appearing amidst changing conditions, but it recognizes a 'fluid-self' which because of its very fluidity cannot be regarded as having altogether distinct states. But in so saying, the Buddhist has admitted a self transcending the experience of the moment. In the very act of analyzing the self and dismissing it as but a series of momentary states, he is passing beyond these states and positing an enduring self which is able to view them together, because a series as such can never become aware of itself. Some say that the belief in such a permanent self is in Buddhism and its negation was introduced by later followers.

v) In the Upanisads, the word *'Avidyā'* means ignorance about the *Atman* being identical with *Brahman*. In Buddhism belief in self-identity is the chief *'Avijja'* and the source of all evil. This *'Avijja'* boils down to the ignorance of the four noble truths called *'Arya-Satya'*, which are ignorance about sorrow, its cause, its extinction and its means of extinction.

vi) In the Upanisads the object to be attained is *'Moksa'*, meaning 'release' from the empirical state of *'Samsāra'* or the recurrent round of birth, death and rebirth, whereby one realizes the unity of *Atman* with *Brahman*. With Buddhism, it is *'Nibbana'*, which means 'blowing out', which is the 'blowing out' of the lower self. Much is made about the difference btween the two states. Some claim that this ideal amounts to annihilation of the individual. However, there is no doubt that this state is ineffable, and amounts to freedom from suffering. Also *'Nibbana'* does represent a condition which results after reaching perfection, while the individual continues to live. This would correspond to *'Jivan-mukti'*. It is a state when the person leads a life of complete peace and equanimity. He then is an *'Arhant'*.

[To continue]

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THE INIMITABLE LIFE STORY OF SRI YOGESH BRAHMACHARI

[TWO]

—Mrs. R. Rattan Singh

After the Kumbh, Yogeshda decided to proceed ahead on his travels. He had heard of Rishikesh, but did not know how to get there. Again a small boy looking very much like a sadhu, came up and said it was 13 miles distance on the road, indicating across the river.

Yogeshda walked for some time till there was habitation around. Then some sadhus directed him to a place where other sadhus lived. But there it was very crowded. He was not a member of the sect. He was given food, but where to spend the night ? The only place he found was under the tin projection of a house. There he settled for the night. His small bundle of a few odds he placed under his head. At dusk he felt someone tugging at it. He discovered a large monkey trying to pull out the bundle. He got up and spent the night sitting huddled up to prevent another attack.

The next day he continued his walk to Rishikesh. Someone warned him not to go too far as the area was all jungle and wild animals prowled about. After halting for the night at some place, he reached Rishikesh.

Again a small boy directed him to go to the Kali Kamli Kshetra. It was meal distribution time. There were many sadhus going to get their food. He was asked to join them. Sadhus usually had piece of cloth tied around their necks, the ends of which were held out, spread wide, to hold the food. Yogeshda had no such cloth, nor did he have a begging bowl. So had to put every thing in his lota, and it was hard to dish out the food from the narrow opening. But he managed somehow. His manners and ways were so unlike those of sadhus. One person while serving him asked how long he had been a sadhu. He felt shy and embarrassed. It was too obvious that he was a beginner. He could not accept uncooked food as he had nothing to cook it in, nor a place to stay. In order to live at the "Kshetra" he had to become a member of the sect. This he could not do.

He could not go to Badrinath as the trip did not materialize. He remembered that he had a friend who worked in the Forest Department at Dehradun. He sent a note

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to him and the next day he got a reply. His friend, Rameshwar Banerji would be happy to see him.

He was awed by the sight of the tall trees and the thickness of the jungle growth. Never in his life had he known fear, but these sky-reaching trees, that seemed to engulf him from all sides frightened him.

Soon he found himself at Doiwala with government servants saluting all officers and also him. Later he went to Dehradun with his friend. This was his first visit to the Doon Valley, where later on he spent many many years.

His friend was going on leave to Kashmir. He invited Yogeshda also to join him. But Yogeshda had to go on foot. So they planned to meet at Srinagar. It took almost a month for him to reach there.

As he trekked on the road to Srinagar, cars would pass by. When they hooted driving up the meandering path he could edge the direction of the route and he often took short cuts to the point from where the horn sounded. In this way the journey was considerably shortened. An English man seeing him trudge along, asked where he was going. "Srinagar", was the reply and he was asked to jump into the car. At Srinagar Yogeshda thanked him and proceeded on his way.

A cooli rushed up and asked where he wished to go. He said "Ashram. "He was led to a wooden building. Naga sadhus lived there. A few were busy mixing *bhang* in a large utensil. He was permitted to stay, but was directed to the other part of the Ashram for meals. He was given dry ingredients and should cook for himself. This could not do. So the task allotted to him was to distribute food to the sadhus. About eight or ten would come to eat at every meal.

One day he distributed the rice as usual. He did not know that the head sadhu would be coming. When he came there was not enough rice for him. The other sadhus all put the blame on Yogeshda, accusing him of having eaten the food himself as he was in charge of it. After this Yogeshda left the place.

He proceeded to Pahalgam from the bus stop. Coolies took him to another ashram. At night sadhus would come to eat at this "Kshetra". Among them was a Bangali sadhu, who recognized him as one from his homeland. They would go for long walks and sing *Bhajans*. Impressed by his melodious voice the sadhu went and told one Swami Sivananda about Yogeshda. He was invited to the Swami's ashram where other sadhus also lived and was asked to sing a bhajan. He sang a verse by Swami Vivekananda in praise of lord Shiva. The sweet voice and the moving melody expressed the deep devotional feeling of the singer. The Swami was charmed beyond words. The pleasant meetings were then often repeated.

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As Yogeshda narrated this event to me, I sat spell bound. When remembering each incident, each moment, all the feelings of the past were revived. When he sang the verse again, his cracking voice was suddenly soft and melodious and his face brightened up as perhaps past memories emerged. His eyes sparkled with a fervor of devotion, strong and vigorous inspite of old age and he gazed with a firm and unshaken gleam of faith that removes the doubt of a disbeliever. I looked earnestly at the face, listening intensively and trying to discern the meaning of some words. He would stop and repeat those words and explain their meaning. He was visibly moved.

Yogeshda stayed a few days at Pahalgam, when plans were made to go to the fair at Kheer Bhawani, the Holy site visited annually by many devotees. It was a few day's journey by ponies and all arrangements were made for food, conveyance and stay. Just as they were leaving, a messenger from his friend, the forest officer, came running, "Ah, we have found you at last". They had looked for him in all the ashrams but could not find him. His friend was waiting for him. But Yogeshda could not meet him as he was committed to visit Kheer Bhawani, and did not like to change his programme.

After attending the fair, he joined his friend and together they went to the Amarnath cave. Darshan is usually during Sravan Purnima day. But they had to make the trip a month ahead as his friend's leave was expiring.

The climb was in three stages. The third stop was in a tent pitched in a cave covered with snow. Above 10,000 ft. there were no trees, only some shrubby growth and snow. Higher up there was only snow. In the tent they cooked their "Khitchri" (rice and dal cooked in one dish) and went to have a bath. On returning they found the Khitchri had become a solid block and had to be heated again. Yogeshda was surprised to see water trickling down into a stream near the tent. Curious to find out the source of the water in a snow bound area, he traced the flow to a flat ground behind the cave. It was a frozen lake. The surface was ice, but underneath there was water that flowed out.

At another spot while trekking up the mountains, there was a large protruding rock, almost overhanging the path. It was the only bare piece amidst a snow covered region. They posed for a snap. Just as the camera was focused, two wild snow ponies came and stood on the rock above and got snapped with them.

The guides were *pandas*. Yogeshda was keen to go to the cave before anyone could reach there, just to make sure that no one was tampering with the *Linga*. One could often hear the people say that the *pandas* usually went ahead and formed the *Linga*. When they entered the cave, they saw the well-formed snow *Linga*,

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beautifully carved as it were, in the most perfect shape. After *darshan*, they had to return immediately to their camp. One cannot stay long enough in the cave as it is too cold and there is no place to camp nearby.

They then returned to Pahalgam and from there to Srinagar. The forest officer left for Dehradun, while Yogeshda decided to stay on for a few days longer.

The trip back to Jammu took him about a month, it was about 200 miles. The whole Kashmir sojourn lasted for about three months.

At Jammu railway station, Yogeshda found he had fever. He lay down on the platform, the train came and all the passengers left. He heard someone call him. He looked up and was told the guard, who was sitting in a tea shop, was calling him. He asked Yogeshda from where had he come and where he wished to go. He gave him some tablets for fever and ordered milk to be given to him every day, all paid by the guard in advance. After two days he returned and enquired how Yogeshda was. By then Yogeshda had developed diarrhoea. He took only a few tablets that were given to him and threw the rest away. The guard took him in the train as far as he was on duty on the route. After that he got him a ticket to Saharanpur.

There a coolie ran up to him and took him to a waiting bus bound for Dehradun. When the passengers were complete, the bus started. On the way there was a puncture. It was repaired; but a little later there was another puncture, in a lonely place where no help was available. The driver got some grass to fill the tyre. With great difficulty he managed to take the vehicle up to the ghats. There again another puncture occurred and the bus could go no further. The passengers were asked to walk. This was hard for Yogeshda as he was weak and tired. Someone accompanied him carrying his belongings. At Dehradun bus stand he had a lemonade and felt refreshed.

He traced his way to a friend's house in Karanpur. He was examined by a doctor who diagnosed his illness as Malaria and gave him a few quinine tablets which Yogeshda did not take. A few days later he was quite well.

The year was coming to an end and he had to return to Shahbagh to see Mataji as directed by Her. His friend told him to visit Rajshahi town and meet Atal Bhattacharjee. Yogeshda did not know that Atal was the same person who had been asked to keep his salary in his absence. Yogeshda asked for a loan, Atal realized that Yogeshda was the person of whose money he was the custodian. Yogeshda took the rail fare and returned to Shahbagh.

When he arrived Bholanath at once recognized him. Mataji was in a trance and so did not see him. He was directed to have his hair cut. His first dish after returning from his pilgrimage was to be *'Charu'*. It is rice and milk with a little ghee cooked on *havan* fire. Then he resumed his official duty.

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FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

—"Kirpal"

May 9, 1959

Dr. Nalini Brahma: How does one get rid of the effects of one's actions?

Sree Ma: God is not revealed by one's actions. You yourself said that God is not bound by our actions. God, who is ever revealed- when the clouds disappear. The mind is the curtain, the covering. The effect of your actions; those actions that will release you from bondage. One has to strive. What has one to do, to remove the covering, the cloud? You are sitting in a pandal. It is covered. There is the curtain, that is removable, that which will be removed.

God is Himself ever shining, radiantly. To reveal God by one's actions; that is impossible. Where there is the revelation, there is the achievement. The revelation and the attainment.

Sri Yogesh Brahmachari: Does one achieve the revelation of God by practice of the Samyam Saptaha. (The seven days of prayer and austerities).

Sree Ma: It will definitely happen. The curtain will be removed and the One who is ever revealed will appear. The removal of the curtain is through your effort. Therefore make an effort and practice auspicious and beneficial work - what is the effect of the manifestation- what happens, what doesn't happen, there remains no question.

This child (Sree Ma) has no bashfulness or hesitation. They are all one's own. There is no other- (Sree Ma) does not talk to another, or eat any one elses food, there is no question of another here, Ma is the child, whatever is said, Ma is that, as one plays the instrument- Ma is in-between the playing and the hearing. Between the two.

Q: About seeing.....

Sree Ma: The one who comes, is between coming and going. One is not beyond that state. Therefore, one must have *satsang,* i.e. the company of the holy and wise.

Q. Rishikesh? What is here and what is there? The atmosphere.....?

Sree Ma: One's motherland—at all places, everything is present. as there is a tree. There are seeds within the tree. Uncountable seeds are present—uncountable forms. The tree in the seed form, and the seed in the tree form. The father, the husband, the son, you alone in those forms.....

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Q: I don't understand....

Sree Ma: It is not something to understand. It is an actual fact. And where is it that God is not, and where is it that the Soul is not. That is not subject to destruction. The one who is in the stage of coming and going; that is another matter. That is in the realm of humanity.

As there is one tree; innumerable seeds, innumerable movements, innumerable states. In this manner all within all. As some direction is there— The One Brahma and no other.

As a bird flies; sometimes it sits on the tree. If it finds a resting place, it sits there. The soul is ever in a state of movement. If there is a special place, then it stays there. That also, according to the state, it stays there. Some can see that, some only. And there is the mind. One makes a solemn promise in the mind, according to one's predilection.

The state is within one, as long as one is in the mind state. In the mind is everything.

Where there is the One Brahma (Lord) and no other, there no question can arise.

[To continue]

●

CAUGHT AND BROUGHT

One day, during the celebrations at Allahabad in 1958, when hundreds of devotees had gathered in the pandal for Ma's *darshan*, an exchange of ideas on our spiritual future had taken place among those in whose midst I also happened to be seated. When many had seemed to agree that only a few among the thousands who come to Ma could hope to attain to spiritual heights, an old and well-known devotee, Sri S.N. Aga, from our group, suddenly addressed Ma loudly thus: "Ma, so many of us come to you. Are all of us going to pass, or will some fail also?" And Ma replied back immediately, "Do you come by your own free will? You are caught and brought here."

— Swami Joyananda Giri

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WITH MOTHER IN THE KUMBH MELA

[Three]

— Shraddha Davenport

The morning of January twelfth. One of Mother's brahmacharinis was passing by our cottage and told Krishnapriya that Mother was going to the Ganges. I dressed in my "favorite sari;" the white one which Mother had given me the day before. Then we went to the camp office and asked Swami Swarupananda where Mother's car would take Her. He directed us down the road south of the camp, saying that the girls had already gone there. It was quite a little walk, but we managed to get to that beach location before Mother arrived.

The reason for this special trip to the rivers was only known to us late that evening when Krishnapriya heard Mother tell it and then shared the story with us.

During the Kumbh Mela at Allahabad in 1966, when Mother went for a bath at the Triveni She saw the three goddesses of rivers as they stood before Her. Mother, who was wearing a bathing dress, had the kheyala to offer Her sari to the goddesses. After doing so, She saw that one goddess took the sari and wrapped it around herself, but the other two were shivering. The occasion of this visit to the Triveni was due to Mother's kheyala to offer saris for those two who did not receive them at the past mela.

When Mother got out of Her car I noticed that Her lip was quite swollen and She sometimes held Her towel over Her mouth. In the past I had been told that things like that occurred as an allergic reaction or if something had been offered to her which was not pure. It could happen even though She had not physically touched the offering or perhaps when it was offered by someone in a totally different location from Her body.

We walked with Mother and Her party across the sand to the water's edge where a boat awaited Her. That boat also carried Dasu, Udas and Makhan (Mother's younger brother, known as Mamu). In the second boat was Nirvanananda, Bhaskarananda, and some others, There was also a large house boat which bore Swami Paramananda, Swami Swarupananda, and some of the ashram girls.

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We watched as Mother directed the seating in Her boat. Satya stood in the water taking movies of Her, and suddenly found that he was sinking further and further into the sand. One shoe was lost in the river as he struggled to get out. May be the river did not like his wearing shoes in Her sacred waters.

There on the river bank we met for the first time a very kind gentleman and sincere devotee from Ahmedabad, Dr. Shelat. He was staying in one of the tents at Mother's camp. Dr. Shelat and a couple of others walked down the beach and procured a boat for us. Among our party was Gadadhar, Ram, Suddhananda, Krishnapriya, Dr. Shelat, Satya, and myself. There were three others whom I did not know.

Our boat was the only one to accompany Mother's three: We rowed out along with Mother and Satya next to Her boat almost continuously. Dasu sat behind Mother playing a tambourine and chanting to the river goddesses.

At one spot in the confluence, the preparations were being made to do the puja, but officers pulled up in their boat saying that the water there was deep and it was not safe for us to stay there. We followed as Mother's boat moved to a different location. There the puja was beautifully done. We observed various articles being offered to the rivers. I saw two white silk saris with red borders, a leaf boat holding a flame, incense, and beautiful garlands. There might have been other articles which I could not see. It was a gorgeous sight and one that was our rare privilege to witness.

When we started back toward the shore, one young man on our boat retrieved a big garland of marigold and gave it to me. After most of the water had dripped off it, I divided it among the ten of us there. Realizing that I was holding in my hands flowers which Mother had offered to the holy rivers at this most auspicious Kumbha Mela, I became totally intoxicated. I was in such a divine mood that if I had been suddenly transported to the west at that moment, I could never have survived the weight of it. The atmosphere of that day was so light and heady, surely of a more spiritually refined place.

Satya and Gadadhar enjoyed taking the oars for a quicker return to the shore and to Mother who had preceded us. Alighting from our boat, we hurried across the sand to where Mother's car was parked. Mother sat waiting for the slower-moving house boat to bring the swamijis and the ashram girls to the landing . Watching the large boat approach, we saw Swami Swarupananda standing at the prow. He waved and asked Satya to take movies. We said, "Film hogia [finished]," but

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Bhaskarananda laughed and said he should just push the button and the clicking sound would make everyone happy. We all laughed as Satya "clicked" away. Soon, Mother's car carried Her from our sight and we started the walk back. It was quite nice. We did not have to rush as we did get there earlier.

Back at Mother's camp we went to see if She was sitting out, but She had gone inside. So we walked out of the front gate and there we found our dear friend Jayananda who had just arrived. He looked radiant and full of joy to again be with Mother. He had brought twenty rolls of movie film for Satya. It was perfect timing, for earlier when Satya had said, "Film ho gia" it really was, for there was not a single roll left in reserve and a lot of time remained before the end of that trip. Jayananda went with the other young men to the sadhu camp where he would be staying. After settling his luggage and bathing, he would come to Mother's pandal.

At 5:00 p.m. Satya came from the camp across the fire road where he had filmed their enactment of Ram Lila. We went directly to Mother's pandal and found Her sitting on Her porch with Chitra at her feet. After some time I saw Jayananda standing at the back railing of the pandal. I told Chitra that he had just arrived and she sent me to bring him to Mother for pronam.

There was a large crowd in the pandal, but when he got near the front Krishnapriya cleared a path for him and he went up the three steps to Mother's porch and offered a lovely garland to Her. When Mother placed the garland over his head, She touched the top of his head blessing him as She sweetly smiled. Chhabi started playing the harmonium. God's Name filled the pandal and Mother graced us with her presence for about two hours.

That evening Satya made a wonderful vegetable soup cooked on our very nice little brass kerosene stove. The stove sat safely in a pit dug into the sand which sheltered it against the wind. Jayananda and Krishnapriya joined us and we all enjoyed the soup which was so full of great Indian vegetables that it was more like a hearty stew. After our meal Krishnapriya went back to Mother's hut and found Her telling some sadhus the story of the saris offered that day to the two river goddesses. Then She sprinkled water from the rivers on the visiting sadhus and Krishnapriya. When Krishnapriya came back to the hut, she told us the story. With the holy water still upon her head, she rubbed it with her hand and then put her hand on my head. So I also shared that blessing. What a dear friend and true *bhakta* of our Mother. A lovely close to a perfect day.

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The following morning I awoke with a sore throat and had almost lost my voice. Darshan was in the large pandal and the warm sun felt good as I stood in the back gazing at Mother's beautiful face. Once again I mentally prayed to Her, asking to receive the same special blessing for which I had petitioned on the parade route. At that exact moment She abruptly turned Her head and eyes to my direction. She gave me such a strong loving look that I could fecl the electricity of it. I stood with goose bumps from head to toe as She held me with Her eyes for a very long time. How can such experience be shaped by words? Lacking understanding of what She has given to me, my words fall like stones when I try to speak of Her gifts.

The next morning January 14th was the first "bath day" of the mela, but I was unable to go out in the pre-dawn cold nor was I able to walk very well. I awoke to the sound and vibration of many feet stampeding on the road just outside our hut. Jumping from my bed, I peered out of the door and saw the police directing a great crowd down our road as they sought to reach the rivers on this auspicious day.

When we went to Mother's pandal we found that Bhaskaranandaji was on Mother's porch. There was a curtain across where he was performing puja of the beautiful Padmanav *moorti*. Mother sat on the other end of the porch facing the moorti, but within full view of us all as we sat before Her. At Mother's direction the fruit which had been offered to the Lord was cut up by the girls as they sat at Mother's feet. That way there was plenty for every one there to have prasad. Mother went into Her cottage as the devotees formed a line to receive prasad.

Feeling weak, I could not stand in line and returned to our hut. I was sorry not to receive prasad, but a little later Krishnapriya brought some for me.

When we went to Mother's house we found Her sitting with Mahant Sri of Nirvani Akhada in the little pandal. No one was allowed to go in, but we stood with Jayananda by the railing at the front and could see Her quite well.

After lunch we walked down the road to the camp of Maharshi Mahesh Yogi where Mother was expected by the Maharshi's devotees. They had made very nice arrangements to greet Mother. When She arrived, She stepped onto a cloth which had been spread across the sand toward a large pandal. Girls in pink saris stood on each side of Her path and strewed flower petals before Her as She entered. Mother was escorted to Her seat on the platform in front of the crowd. She spoke a few words which were appreciated by the devotees-whose guru was not at the mela.

When we went to Mother's pandal the next morning, we found that Mother had gone to visit another camp. The large pandal across from Mother's cottage was

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being prepared for a sadhu bhandara to take place later that day. As we stood near Mother's cottage waiting for Her return, Dr. Shelat and Mr. Bal Krishna Gupta joined us.

We all moved to the railing around Mother's smaller pandal. Where asanas were placed for the sadhus who would be coming to the bhandara. As we stood there mother's car arrived, and when She entered the pandal She came near where we stood to inspect the preparations. Afterwards She went briefly into her cottage then came out again and sat before us for a few sweet moments. There was a beautiful coral-colored shawl around her shoulders and a large garland of fresh flowers framed her face. She looked radiant. Chitra saw that I had brought some things which I wished for Mother to bless. So when Mother went into her cottage Chitra told me to wait. Soon Chitra came and took the things in to Mother. One special thing, an asana for our friend Chaitanya, Chitra lovingly placed beneath Mother's feet. All the other items were blessed by Mother including some flowers that I wished to place in the river on behalf of my mother who gave me birth . She had died when I was just five years old. Also some flowers for my grandparents who were recently deceased.

Chitra brought meditation shawls for Satya, Jayananda, and the other American men who were there. Mother's blessings showered upon us in great abundance.

When the food started arriving for the sadhus, we were told to move to the rear of the camp. Before long we left to take our lunch, and as we walked past the little pandal where Mother sat, She looked at us so lovingly, with almost a longing attitude, that it was very difficult to go, but we had no choice.

At about 4:30 p.m. we came back to see Mother, but the crowds, which had been growing daily, were becoming hard to control. The pushing and shoving made it impossible. We left for a while then tried again to see Mother. When Chitra saw me being pushed she had me stand in a more protected spot and we had a short darshan and received Mother's prasad from Chitra before She went inside for the night.

After lunch and a little rest we went if Mother was giving darshan. She sat on Her porch with only a few girls and Swami Swarupanandaji. There was a crowd all around the pandal, but to our delight there were only four people sitting inside. It was a feast for the soul to sit with Her–even for a few minutes.

The following day brought more and more people. Pilgrims were camping anywhere they could find an empty spot.

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There is a quality which I greatly admire in India and her people—something exceedingly rare in the West. That quality holds the spiritual as having the only true value and true reality. Any discomfort of the physical is dismissed as the transient inconvenience, which is really all that it is. Many times I have seen how lacking is my endurance and how easily the prize is wrenched from my feeble grasp.

There at that most auspicious Kumbh Mela we both experienced an extremely intense spiritual current permeating the whole area. It was not only the mela itself, but we were also in such close physical proximity to Mother, whose play it all was. Progressively we felt as though there was less and less skin covering our bodies until our nerves lay bare before any experience that touched us. Whether positive or negative it was vastly exaggerated by that highly-charged environment. Sometimes we would laugh and say that we were Mother's yoyo's-up, down, up, down-all in the space of minutes and within a range of great opposites.

[To continue]

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SRI ANANDAMAYEE MA—A UNIQUE SPIRITUAL TEACHER

— Sri S. K. Bose

Sri Anandamayee Ma often used to say, *"The really important thing is to pay attention to the root of the mantra, keep your mind fixed on that. Perseverance alone counts. There must be efforts in some form or other upto the stage of spontanneity and realization. Ages and ages have been wasted in this way. Now, friend, return to your own house. Remember there is a state beyond efforts and effortlessness, which is ultimately to be realized."*

Acquiring spiritual knowledge merely by reading scriptures, listening discourses or performing *asanas* without proper guidance by a spiritually enlightened person for transformation towards self-realization may often lead to disastrous results. This happened to a devotee from USA with squint eyes, came first time to Anandamayee Ma. He was practicing meditation for many years by fixing eyes on the tip of the nose as laid down in Bhagawat Gita in order to intensify concentration on the chosen deity without any discontinuity. Knowing from the person of his spiritual practices through an interpreter, She emphasized, *"No doubt there must be efforts to concentrate the mind upon the true self, but allow it to occur in conformity with the normal course of nature free from physical constraints"*.

Being a follower of different spiritual organisation, the person received directions from Anandamayee Ma in dispelling doubts and correcting procedure while performing sadhana. Thus, Her guidance protected many ethically and psychologically unprepared persons from disastrous results during spiritual practices before gaining perfection. It is therefore important to accept a realized master or at least some one who is gifted with the blessings of a spiritually enlightened person as Guru who shows correctly the path to acquire spiritual knowledge.

"A proper Guru is one to whom your mind is attuned. He should be endowed with tranquility, patience, forgiveness and other virtues. He should be capable of attracting others even with his eyes just as a magnet attracts iron. He should have a

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feeling of equality towards all. He who has all these virtues is a true Guru" (Ramana Maharshi).

Presence of all these supra-conscious qualities in Anandamayee Ma, attracted an Austrian lady, Miss Blanca Schlamm, who was greatly impressed on her first meeting with Her. She was convinced that Anandamayee Ma could probably dissolve the distance between herself and God, keeping in view her exact spiritual requirement. Her desperate search for a spiritual Guru in India finally ended at the holy feet of Anandamayee Ma, who could teach and transform her towards self-awareness. lead her from spiritual darkness to Divine Light.

There is an infallible law that when the disciple is ready, Guru is bound to appear. Perhaps that auspicious moment had arrived for Miss Blanca, who was later named by Ma as 'Atmanand'. When light is thrown to the inner world, the outer fades into insignificance. But there comes a state when there is no inner and outer, but all is same as *"one whole"*, as was realized by Atmanand in Anandamayee Ma's personality. Sri Ma also noticed on seeing her for the first time : *"a strong tendency towards mysticism and later exclaimed, wherever you go, you are mine"*. This was nothing less than *diksha* for Atmanand.

Although there is a distinct difference between Guru and a teacher. A teacher makes one to learn, a Guru helps the disciple to transform and realize the divinity already there within him. For Atmanand, Sri Ma was both a perfect teacher and later a spiritual Guru, helping all the time in transforming towards inner self in order to realize divine grace which is showered upon all the time. "The trouble is we think I am doing *sadhana*. It is He who does and His grace that calls you to do". Nevertheless "One should constantly seek the conquest of mind and self control which are the fruits of wisdom". Once the mind is at peace, untangled, pure and free from worldly affairs, it does not long for anything, nor does it reject anything, always immersed in the true self.

Although Anandamayee Ma never attached Herself to conventional *Guru sishya parampara*, rather expressed her own experiences encountered during the process of self–initiated *sadhana* to those for whom She had *"kheyala"* . Atmanand out of a few had the privilege to receive step by step Her teachings, directions and advices in following correctly every course of sadhana. In this respect the teachings that were imparted by Anandamayee Ma to an advanced spiritual practitioner like Miss Blanca were primarily to develop self control, switching off mental preoccupation from objects of the world, living amidst worldly objects without the 'I'. This implies that, liberation, the goal of life, could-be achieved only by a long process of progressive spiritual training. It does not stop with this, but emphasizes for the

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attainment of liberation from repeated cycles of life and death, a stage where one is supra-social and also supra-personal. It is precisely to attain this state for which a person needs the spiritual guidance of a guru, the supreme authority.

Beginning with the role and importance of Guru towards the path of perfection. Anandamayee Ma dispelled the doubts and obstructions in a very simple manner.

"As long as mind is in a state of disorder and divided, one cannot decide between two or three courses of actions. But this state of confusion slowly goes away if mind is raised to higher level beyond fickleness by doing some sadhana for some hours everyday".

On further asking by Atmanand as to what kind of sadhana do you suggest , the answers which came out of Ma's lips were :

- *First put yourself into the right state of mind by thinking yourself as part of one atma that pulsates in every animate being.*
- *Imagine that Divine light and grace are showered all the time upon you.*
- *Become enveloped with great calm, quiet, until you are still and absorbed in concentration on your breathing.*
- *Do not hold or force your breath, but simply watch the natural inhaling and exhaling.*
- *If thoughts wander, collimate it to your breathing.*
- *Along with this try to enquire about the true nature of your 'Self'.*
- *Try to remember you are a part of 'That' and you work as a part of greater activity.*
- *Keep a diary and write down daily what experiences you have had, how you feel about yourself, your work and your surroundings. How your outlook changes.*
- *Keep account of the spiritual benefit that comes to you.*
- *Do not get disheartened if you feel that you are not getting anywhere but just go on.*
- *If you have any experiences in your meditation, note them, look at them like a spectator and just go ahead with your sadhana.*

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- *Avoid physical contact with others as far as possible to prevent transfer of bad qualities in you without causing them to feel.*
- *Do not tell anyone about this.*
- *Keep the thought of God realization alone as a companion day and night, which will significantly transform the vibrational field caused by the society and the environment. Even the food we take has influence upon the stability of mind.*
- *Strict observance of the purity rules are therefore to be observed with proper understanding, otherwise the practice may degenerate into superstition and frustration.*

This all implies that a spiritual practitioner should think himself as 'Self luminous' poised in the bliss of the Self. Once this state is realized, our doubts and obstacles in the way of spiritual advancement are dispelled. Events that bind the mind are reduced to nothing. From this state of nothingness the individual gets united with the origin of creation, dissolution and destruction, the *'Ultimate eternal one, the Absolute'*.

While practicing *sadhana* Atmanand received step-by-step guidance from Anandamayee Ma, who protected her from all obstacles.

Remember that mind can be a tool for bondage or liberation depending upon the way one turns. One is to keep in mind that the goal can only be attained by surrendering totally and unconditionally to Him. Then only He comes to rescue you.

"STRIVE TO BE WORTHY OF THE GRACE OF YOUR 'GURU'"

Jai Ma

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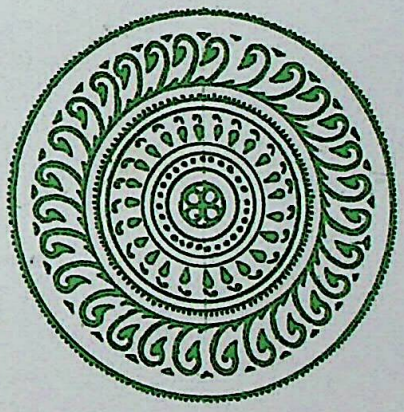
MA ANANDAMAYEE

AMRIT VARTA



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MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

VOL.-9 **April, 2005** **No. 2**

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The journal mainly publishes articles relating to Sri Ma. Other informative articles on religious literature and Saints and Teachers of any country or religion will also be welcome.

Writings from devotees about their own experiences, not entirely personal or private, throwing some light on Sri Ma's behavioural pattern with people who came close to her, are also specially invited.

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Ma in an ecstatic mood, sitting on dried grass in front of the Varanasi ashram *Havanshālā* in the early fifties.

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MATRI VANI

Indolence and lust—these two are the greatest obstacles on the path to self-realisation. It is patience and fortitude that are most helpful. If anyone has been so blessed as to feel that the spiritual path is all-beneficial - if God bestows His grace on anyone in this form — it is necessary that he should exert his will power to the utmost and devote all the twenty-four hours to the service of God.

* * *

The various activities that aid the spiritual life have to be knit together closely with ever renewed effort: as the thread is not seen in a garland - in like manner - without a gap. No sooner does the mind get an opening than it will direct all its actions downwards, towards the perishable. Therefore even though meditation may never be successful, persist to the limit of your capacity : one should engage in japa, worship, recite holy texts *(path)*, sing the praises of God *(Kiran)* - each one as it suits his temperament and inclination - or read books on spiritual subjects.

* * *

Choose carefully and abide strictly, such occupations that awaken Godly thoughts and feelings.Be very firm in your resolve to cultivate as much as possible the actions that are helpful to a God-centred life. Engage in them even when there is no desire to do so, as one takes medicine. With or without inclination persevere in their performance, so that there may be no time at all left for the display of restlessness.

* * *

To indulge in physical comforts is to turn aside from the communion with God : to yield to the likes and dislikes of the tongue and to taste in order to satisfy the palate is to deprive oneself in equal measure of the relish of the Divine. Therefore whatever food or drink is taken should be consecrated to God and partaken of as His Prasad. Do not eat what does not agree with you. Take a full meal at midday, milk in the afternoon and fruit or some light refre shment and water at night.

* * *

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Keep your thinking on a very high level. Praise and blame, filth and sandalpaste must become alike. Nothing in the world should be repulsive to you. Look into your own heart and become repelled by the repulsion. It is only so long as the mind is filled with the thought of God, with the awareness of His Presence, that there can be real rest.

* * *

Food, sleep, toilet, clothes etc., should be given only as much attention as is needed for the maintenance of health. What is the use of merely well-nourished body ? Rather it should become an aid to the spiritual life. Exclusively to this end must the current of life be diverted, away from the world, moving entirely in the direction of God. Take pains to discover for yourself the various things that you can do with real joy and that will bring you nearer to God. Has anyone ever become great by sitting down and saying "I cannot" ?

* * *

Anger, greed and the like must be altogether abandoned. Neither should you be swayed by praise or prestige. Do not retort, in a spirit or contradiction to anything that is said. Reply politely with a smile and say no more

* * *

All work must be done as a service to God. The longer you can be inwardly stirred by the feeling of His presence, the more will your body, your mind and your actions progress towards the Divine state of being *(Divya Bhava)*. Attune yourself solely to God. Where the thought of God is, there He Himself is present in the form of that thought. To seek truth is man's one and only duty.

* * *

Learn by heart hymns and verses in praise of God and repeat them whilst you move about. Never allow your mind to be idle. Keep it engaged in the repetition of a mantra, of God's name, of sacred hymns and the like, or else in pure Remembrance.

●

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH MA

[Translated from Bengali]

— Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka Ashram, August 20, 1939

In the morning Ma was silling in front of the Smriti Mandir and conversation with devotees was going on.

Pramatha : Tell me, Ma, how can I get rid of my doubt ?

Ma : As soon as He is realized all doubts are resolved. Unless and until your spiritual power *(chaitanya sakti)* or your Guru are revealed, doubts will not cease.

Pramatha : This is no reply to my question. I repeat, please tell us what we have to do to resolve our doubts.

Ma : Start by putting into practice what you have gained from your Guru. By continuing to do so, His mercy will resolve all your doubts.

Abhaya : This is not correct. Even though you say it, we cannot believe it.

Ma : I never ask anybody to listen to my advice or to accept it. This body merely voices what you evoke from it. However, some people do receive from these words what they are seeking. On the other hand some derive no benefit, since they don't require anything. This is somewhat like this : suppose you have dropped something on the way. Someone coming behind you may notice this but goes on, while someone else picks it up carefully and makes use of it. My words are like this.

Pramatha : Please tell us how to get rid of our doubts.

Ma : Have I not already told you to start your work with whatever your Guru has bestowed upon you. Quite often it is asked, how can the mind become still through japa ? Everyone is anxious to have peace of mind, because without stilling the mind *ananda* is not possible. Here is one way to set the mind at rest.

I have already explained to you that Guru mantra and *Ista* are one. To contemplate the Guru or the *Ista* and to perform mantra japa amounts to the same because the Name and the Named are identical. So start by repeating the mantra received from your Guru. During this japa meditate on the image your Guru has indicated to you or on your Guru's photo. Where exactly should you concentrate during meditation ? It is good to concentrate in the heart because this is the place

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where joy and sorrow arise. However, if your Guru has instructed you to concentrate on anyone of the six chakras, (along the meridian of the body as explained in the Yoga Sastras) it is a different matter. You will concentrate in whatever spot that the Guru has indicated. You may have read about the chakras that are situated in different locations of the body, and how each chakra has a different shape and a special presiding deity. This body has not studied anything, but it speaks on this subject because it has actually and quite clearly seen all this. By meditating on these different chakras, various states or spiritual experiences may be the result. But let us leave all this now.

You will start your meditation by imagining your Guru or *Ista* enthroned in your heart. There is yet another reason for concentrating in the heart. If you want to grow a tree out of a seed, you bury the seed under the earth and go on watering it. Due to your care and through the strength of the soil the tree grows out of the seed. Why do I stress the strength of the soil ? Because in order to produce a tree out of a seed, good earth is necessary. Even though the tree grows upwards, its roots remain underground, and it is the roots that constitute the life of the tree. Because it is seen that however many branches and twigs may be chopped off, the tree does not wither since its roots are intact. To enable the tree to grow you water it regularly. This water you pour at its bottom surface, not directly into the roots. The water reaches the roots and helps the tree to grow. Similarly, the roots of this body-tree of ours lie in the head while the branches are down below. The heart is the foundation of this tree and any nourishment given here will reach the roots. For this reason one should meditate in the heart.

A devotee : Where exactly is the heart ?

Ma : The heart is everywhere, in the hands, in the feet, in every part of the body. Yet, when we speak about the heart we normally understand this place (pointing to Her chest). This is where one should concentrate while meditating.

Now, what should you do when sitting down for meditation ? Whether it is the Guru or the *Ista,* whom you have placed on the pedestal in your heart, contemplate His form. But during this meditation you find that your mind cannot remain steady. You cannot keep your mind fixed in one place even for a minute. This is why I advised that after placing your Guru on His seat in your heart, watch your breath moving in and out. It is this breathing that enables us to remain alive. However different human beings, animals, birds, etc., may be in species and also each creature from the other, in this respect, as far as *prana* (life) is concerned, they are the same. Because they all remain alive by breathing. Hence, enthrone your Guru in your heart and contemplate Him as pervading the whole universe through *prana,* the

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breath of life. The Guru is all-pervasive. So one should perform japa of the mantra received from the Guru and simultaneously watch one's breathing.

Everybody can do this. But the practice of japa in rhythm with one's breathing should be done on the advice of the Guru. If it is done merely because one has read about it in a book, there is the possiblility of the brain becoming over-exerted. All the same, in many cases it is seen that by this practice the japa fits in naturally with the rhythm of the breath. In such cases there is no danger.

For performing puja you have seen how people mould an earthen image and then instil life into it by some special rites. Consciousness *(chaitanya satta)* exists everywhere. It is equally present in every creature *(jiva)* as well as in earth. But because we do not realize that living consciousness is also present in clay, we mould an earthen image and then instill life into it through some special ceremonies. Similarly, enthroning your Guru in your heart, think of Him as pervading everywhere as the life force *(prana)* and then engage in your japa while watching your breath moving in and out.

The benefit derived from watching the movement of one's breath while practising japa is that the mind becomes somewhat calm. Whether it is a picture or an image, the mind cannot concentrate on it for any length of time. But because breathing implies movement it is a little easier to tie the restless mind to it. In a similar fashion, to make a restless child remain quietly in a room, one has to provide the kid with a toy.

Now consider something else : the waves that arise in water are nothing but water. Yet, because of their movement they appear to be separate. The same substance is simultaneously quiet and in motion, broken into parts and unbroken. This constitutes the ceaseless *lila* of the universe. Beyond that there is a state where there are neither water nor waves. This is the unmanifest *(avyakta)*.

If you concentrate on the waves for sometime you will find that they are nothing but water. In the same way if you continue for some length of time to carry out your japa while concentrating your restive mind on your breathing or on your Guru in the guise of *prana*, you will find that your mind has become calm, and the consciousness *(chaitanya satta)* that is always present within you becomes revealed of itself. Once this revelation has taken place there is an end to doubts.

Another advantage of carrying out japa in rhythm with your breathing is that it can be performed everywhere, at all times. Inhaling and exhaling continues without a break; so all you have to do is to perform your japa in rhythm with your breathing. There is no need to keep a picture or photo in front of you. Besides, people proceeding by whatever path, whether that of devotion or dedicated action or

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knowledge, can carry this out. To imagine one's Guru to be the life force *(prana)* of all creatures is helpful on the path of knowledge. To enthrone his Guru or *Ista* in one's heart is helpful on the path of devotion; the performance of japa and the like is an aid on the path of dedicated action. So you see, this method of sadhana will suit aspirants regardless of the path they pursue.

* * *

In the evening I returned to the Ashram and found Ma seated on a cot on the veranda of the Siva Temple. Speaking to an old man, She remarked: "Baba, do keep a piece of sugar candy in your mouth."

The old man : Are my words so very harsh ?

Ma: (smiling) Not that. When you keep a piece of sugar candy in your mouth it will melt slowly and keep your mouth sweet. That is to say, if you do not keep your tongue idle but engage it constantly in japa, you will get the taste of its sweetness. Otherwise a "return ticket" has to be taken -- one has to come back again and again.

Addressing another person, Ma said : "Here we are staying in a dharmasala, this is not our real hearth and home. If it were, could we be forced against our will to leave it? When the call comes we cannot delay even for an instant, neither do we get the opportunity to make preparations. As we are so we have to quit. This is why I request you to try and follow a path by which you can return to your real home and not have to wander from one dharmasala to another again and again.

Pointing towards an aged lady, Ma said: "Ma, with your Gopal remain inside your room and shut the doors. This is the way to peace. One by one you have lost all your teeth, now you are toothless *(bedanta)*.* If you cannot stick to your Gopal, you will have to return again and become toothless once more.

Another lady : Ma, I cannot bear the worries and troubles of my household any longer. There is constant unrest.

Ma : No, you are still liking it, otherwise how could you live in it ? Once a house catches fire, can one remain in it ? One has to run away with great speed. Since you are still living in it, it appears that although there is some trouble, yet you are still fond of your home."

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* ***Bedanta*** -- toothless. & ***Vedanta*** Philosophy, a play upon words.

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A VISION GRANTED*

—S. N. Sopory

In September 1952 I got orders for transfer from Calcutta to Bombay after a posting of four years, during which period I got more opportunity to be near Mataji than at any other time before.

Both my wife and myself were, naturally, thinking all the time how and when we would again have such a wonderful opportunity, particularly because we were proceeding to a place absolutely on the other side of the country and far away from the region usually visited by Mataji those days.

Many friends and office staff came to Howrah Station to see us off with many garlands and flowers the sight of which in such profusion carried our thoughts away to a different world. We were thinking of Mataji all the time, thinking how nice it would have been if these garlands and flowers could be offered at her lotus feet, instead of being given to us.

The train steamed out and gradually the waving hands got out of sight, but our thoughts remained with Mataji and we talked of nothing else. We took the longer route to Bombay via Allahabad, because my wife had to get down at Allahabad. We had heard that Mataji was likely to be at Vindyachal, near Mirzapur and so my wife's programme was to go to Vindhyachal from Allahabad and then to proceed to Gorakhpur to see her ailing sister.

Next day when our train reached Mirzapur, which is the nearest stop of the mailtrain for Vindhyachal, there was such a strong urge to have Mataji's *Darshan*, that I got down and looked all around to see if by chance Mataji was at the station. This was a futile attempt, since Mataji usually went by car from Varanasi to Vindhyachal.

Soon the train left Mirzapur and in a short time it was passing over that portion of the railway track which is seen from the Vindhyachal Ashram or from which the Ashram can be seen, far away on top of the hill. I was so excited that I opened the door of the compartment and stood holding the hand rails in order to have as clear a

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*. Collection from the old writings of late Sri. S. N. Sopory, one of the very old Kashmiri devotees of Shree Ma.

—Courtesy : Sri Ajoy Sopory

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view as possible of the Ashram, as if the view through the window was not enough.

Lo and behold ! a miracle happened. My earnest desire to have Mataji's *Darshan* was fulfilled in a most unusual and unexpected way. Right in front of me, on the lowest portion of the ridge of the hill and far below the Ashram. I saw as clear as day-light that Mataji was standing there facing my side with a group of Ashramites whom I could recognise. At this distance of time I don't remember all the names but Narain Swamiji, Bunidi, and a few others were there.

I was so overjoyed and excited that I forgot to do *Pranam* but instead of that I rushed inside the compartment and picked up a towel that was lying on the berth and started waving it frantically in order to make my presence known to Mataji.

This occurrence left me in a daze for some time. However, I had a very clear *Darshan* of Mataji, little realising at that time that even the lowest part of the ridge was so far away from the train that a clear view could not be had in normal circumstances. It was as if the whole group picture was magnified to a very large size, and even the hillside was, so to say, shifted closer towards our side to enable me to have the *Darshan* as if in a normal way.

My wife had not seen anything and so I explained everything to her and at the same time I put down the entire episode in writing in a letter to Didiji. I gave it to my wife to hand over to Didiji. I also mentioned in my letter how grateful I was for Mataji's infinite kindness in blessing me with her *Darshan* even in a most impossible and unusual situation in a most extraordinary way.

Much later it became clear to me that Mataji in her great compassion had not only granted my wish to have her *Darshan* but also had a *KHEYAL* to bless me with her Grace in all my endeavours in the new place to which I was going. I was going to the Head Office of my company to take up a new challenging job. By Ma's grace I proved my worth and was promoted to the highest rank.

Another more important aspect in which Mataji's *KHEYAL* and Grace touched me was in regard to my services in respect of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. It was almost against insuperable odds that I pressed for the *Samyam Saptah* of 1954 to be held in Bombay. There were very few devotees in Bombay those days, such as Mooljibhai and Nandubhai Desai and a few other. It was absolutely and entirely due to Mataji's Grace that it became possible to hold the *saptah* in Bombay. Subsequently this function turned out to be one of the most successful ones and till now many Mahatmas and others remember it so. Mataji stayed on for three weeks with us, and that by itself must be a near record as a stay in continuation of any *Samyam Saptah !* Many new devotees came to Mataji as a result of this function, to name a few important ones, Shri B. K. Shah, Shri D. I. Kania and several others.

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The outstanding services rendered by this new group of Bombay devotees since then to Mataji and to the Sangha as such are unique and therefore it can be said that the Bombay *Samyam Saptah* in the year 1954 was a very important event in the history of the Sangha, which ushered in a new phase and new direction in the services rendered for progress of the Sangha and towards the furtherance of aims and ideals preached by Mataji. To me it dawns now that somehow Mataji in her *KHEYAL* picked me as an instrument to render some little service in this direction on that day when she accorded her Holy *Darshan* to me, who was being carried away at sixty miles per hour in a mail train !

Now to complete the story I must relate what Mataji was actually doing at the time when my train was passing Vindhyachal. My wife wrote to me after going to Vindhyachal that Mataji came out to the verandah of the upper floor room of the Ashram on the Astabhuja Hills a little before the train was to pass, and stood there looking in the direction of the Railway track. The persons mentioned by me were with her at that time. The verandah has a sloping roof and the shade prevents clear vision from outside even at a shorter distance. From a long distance it was an impossibility to recognise a whole group of persons.

Just as our train came in sight Mataji remarked, "Is there any known persor travelling by the train today ?" Bunidi said that to their knowledge no one was going. Soon afterwards Mataji said, "Look some one is waving some cloth". In reply to this Bunidi said that some third class passenger must be drying his clothes. After that Mataji remained quiet. The significant and interesting fact is that Mataji intentionally provided proof of the fact that she knew that some one known was in that train and she had come out of her room specifically for that reason. Still more significant is the fact that out of infinite kindness she responded to some thought wave of mine that must have reached her and she gave me her *Darshan* by projecting the entire image of her group to a point within my view, and at sufficient magnification, to be lifelike and normal in every way.

I was pining for her *Darshan* and the response from the other side was immediate and instantaneous, and so much so that out of her infinite compassion for her child she also lost no time in giving me not only her *Darshan* but a view of all those who were with her. My own interpretation of this particular act on her part is that by my mentioning the names of all the others, an authenticity was attached to the whole episode. Otherwise my story could be considered as day-dreaming. This act of kindness on Mataji's part proves the oft mentioned saying that if you take one step towards God, God takes two steps to come to you, and pick you up in His arms. This is just what Mataji did.

What compassion ! What magnanimity ! Jai Ma ! Our Ma !

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CONVERSATION WITH SWAMI VIJAYANANDA

Q. - What can I do about all my defects of character and about failure ?

A. - Keep in mind that in *sadhana* (and life) we have to learn to fall and get back up again and again, like a child who is learning to walk. The child will not say "I don't want to make the effort to try again" ! When you see your faults and when you fail, just learn the lesson and go on, forgetting about the failure (excessive feelings of guilt are useless).

Remember your victories !

With the right mental attitude, you can see that your defects of character are an occasion to learn, that the noise outside can be a help to concentrate on your inner silence etc.

Socrates himself used the bad temper of his wife in order to learn how to keep cool in any situation; one day she was so angry with him that after screaming she threw water on him. Very calm, Socrates just said: "After thunder comes the rain" !!

A fall occurs every time we become proud, but it's precisely the way to learn humility.

Remember that it is also normal to have defects of character, otherwise you would not need any *sadhana* nor any *guru*. Just stop identifying yourself with these faults, simply *observe* them, without action upon them. For example, if you have a tendency to criticise people, keep lucid about them (see their defects clearly), but avoid thinking and talking about their faults, and put your attention mostly on their positive qualities.

However, it is important to be lucid while you see the divine in everyone: you should not mix with people who are not fit for you. Dirty water is also water, but you do not drink it.

Q. - How can we know whether we are making any progress spiritually ?

A. - The most important sign is the diminution of negative emotions like anger, fear, desire etc., or at least a major ability to control them. This usually goes with more love and compassion for everyone, while being less attached to family and friends. Meditation is actually mostly a help for that; there is little use in meditating if the results cannot be seen in daily life with a better self-control and more compassion ! We should try to always keep in harmony

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with our surroundings and with everybody. So if you practice meditation regularly but cannot control your anger, you should stop meditating (just repeat your mantra and observe your thoughts), and start by learning how to deal with your negative emotions.

Q. - When negative thoughts come to my mind, how can I chase them away ?

A. - The best way is just to observe them and let them go without fighting against them, without acting upon them, just avoiding to identify yourself with them. Say "it is my mind, it is not me". Negative thoughts are a mere product of the mind with no reality. A spiritual discipline helps to keep a silent mind; you learn to use it when it is necessary and to leave it quiet the rest of the time, just like your hands and feet remain still when you don't need them.
When you cannot do that, then an easier way is to substitute them with positive thoughts with the repetition of your mantra, with prayer, *kirtans* etc. For example, if you want to conquer sexual and romantic desires, you can try to see the Divine in every person instead of their physical appearance, seeing the divine Mother in each woman and Shiva (or any other manifestation) in each man.

Q. - Would you please give us some advice on how to keep a good health ?

A. - First avoid orienting too much your attention on your body, and put it more and more on the Divine, using *japam*, meditation, *satsaṇg* etc. (these practices also have a very good influence on the immune system). The mind is powerful, so the more you think of the inevitable small physical problems (we all have some !), the more they become important. If you think about Ma or any other manifestation of the Divine, they become much smaller !
When you are ill, of course the first thing is to do your best to be cured; but before you are well you can try to use the suffering as an opportunity to become less attached to your body.

Q. - What do you think of the numerous cases of depression in Occident ?

A. - Ma used to say that the world is a big madhouse... Who is crazy, who is mentally sane ?
Apart from the cases of depression that are really psychopathological, many depressed people in Occident have a deep spiritual longing for renunciation, but they are not fully aware of it; it is not part of their culture and tradition, unlike Indian culture. A sign of this is that some people get better by orienting their life towards more sprituality.

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A good thing to be aware of is that even in the worst thing that happens there is at least one "white point", the seed of something positive; and even in the best thing or event there is a "black point", something that goes wrong or that is disappointing. This is well illustrated by the symbol of *Tao (Yin* and *Yang)*. Depression also can sometimes be a "blessing in disguise".

Q. - What are the characteristic of *Vedanta* as compared to other spiritual paths ?

A. - *Vedanta* is simple, it has no complicated methods or rituals. There is nothing external to fight against: all is inside of you. By purifying the mind through discrimination between illusion and Reality, and by respecting *Dharma* in every aspect of your life, your real Self appears !

The essence of *sadhana* is explained in just two words in *Katha Upanishad: "Avriti Shakshu"*, which means "look inside". In the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali, Raja Yoga is described as the cessation of mental waves.

Although I like its simplicity, *Vedanta* is not an easy path at all - as a matter of fact it is not adapted to everyone. One of the main difficulty of *Vedanta* is renunciation. Very few people are ready to renounce pleasures, wealth, power honnors, worldly love ...But those who can are on the surest way to attain inner peace, Self-knowledge and the supreme Joy that is infinitely more intense than any worldly pleasure.

Q. - Why are *brahmacharin (i) s* and *sadhus* so often easily influencable ?

A. - Because being deeply oriented towards spiritual life, many of them are not aggressive, and are so kind that they tend to accept almost anything from anybody ... It is a good quality for a spiritual seeker, provided he has also a great ability to discriminate between what is acceptable and what is not.

It is just what is expressed in the story that Ramakrishna told about the cobra who used to kill or do harm to many people. One day, the cobra was about to attack a great sage, who neutralized it without even touching it. The cobra was amazed and listened to the sage when he told it to stop harming people, because it was accumulating a lot of bad *karma*. The cobra agreed, and even received initiation from the sage. After its new *guru* left, the cobra repeated its *mantra* continuously and did not attack anyone, not even the smallest animal. It lived on some grass and herbs, becoming very slim and weak. The children were not afraid of it anymore, and even started being cruel with it, beating it and throwing it in the air. The cobra did not defend itself, practising a total *ahimsha* (non-violence). The next year, when its *guru* came back to

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see it, the cobra was not to be seen anywhere. The sage asked the children, who said that the cobra had died. But he knew that his disciple could not die before attaining Self-realization, since it was under his protection, so he called it. Finally he heard a voice saying *"Guruji* I am here ! " The cobra was well hidden and in very poor health. So the sage asked it why it was so skinny and full of scars. The cobra said gently. "Oh, the children were just playing... " Its *guru* replied: "You are stupid ! I told you not to harm anyone, but if someone wants to harm you, you can hiss and show the hood, so that he leaves you in peace !"

This is what we should do when we have a spiritual life: avoid getting angry and avoid hurting anyone, but when it is necessary *pretend* to be angry or even threatening, in order to protect what has to be protected.

Q. - Does a *yogi* still has a fear of death ?

A. - A *yogi* who has reached the supreme state is not scared of death anymore, not being identified with his body and knowing when he will die. He is also free of the most subtle fears, like fear of failing to accomplish fully his own religious duty, or of doing something wrong spiritually. He is fully identified with the Divine, and when the time comes his body will just fall, like a leaf falls from the tree: the tree (divine *Conscience)* is not affected by it.

Before you reach that state, remember what Ma used to say: death is like going from a room to another, or like changing your clothes. In reality, we are usually more afraid of suffering than of dying. Usually we imagine how death might be according to what we saw or heard about other people's death. So we often think that it might be terrible, although it is often just like falling asleep ! Anyway, death is just the end of your "envelope", the body; the Being that is the real you is Eternal, and can never be damaged in any way.

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JAI MA

—Dhiraj Sapru

.... ya mate - life Is - 'good' or 'bad' - shallow things - all they ever do is segregate - which in 'common' language spells "DISTRUCTION".

... therefore, aspire to be "nirgun" - which means not a state of 'absence' of temperament, rather being fully - conscious of it; or it's like this - if you "knew" that you are angry, you would want to know "why" - an earnest - willing - inquiry by it's very virtue of being, will nullify and devour the seed of anger ... you know what is trying to be gotten at, don't you ...

but really, and, fathom this, man - you know, sometimes she's so very close that she's you - playfully asking with all the innocence of a upright - little -girl, "why aspire only to experience mere fleeting glimpses, sometimes, of "THAT", that which in reality pretty much covers the entire - eternity; come on, my dearest, let go, take the plunge, be a living part of the whole - won't you, sweetheart ?"

.... consider that in the light of this - pleasure is actualiy nothing but a sand-trap on path of a sadhak - engaging him in irrelativities; which of course has nothing to do with his being in a joyous state...

Stand apart and see this - should pleasures bind you, the only outcome possible (eventually) is pain ...

that is the. eternal law... for, fastened to the horse, the cart must follow...

"Be in the world - but not of it" - says madhav through the Geeta; get into that - to explore out the 'true' nature of things; things marked out as "top-priority", sometimes, don't as much as bother, nor matter ...

"Life" is one-simply because - IT always has been ...

the hugest 4 - D, interactive - film is forever on, projected on a screen big enough to project on ..... IT's here' - IT's 'now' - you are in it - as always ... no, it's no achievement being in it -not till one learns the secret of "withdrawing - from - the - show" at will ...

"Be in the world - but not of it"

you see, it is thus, the mother to Buddhahood is the wish for enlightenment - which is nothing other than Prajnaparamita - transcendent wisdom or ma; She becomes the very path - walking along which, She merges into Herself - That is Divinity, or "altogetherness"....

jai ma

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VALUES OF VEDANTA FOR MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

—Prof, Bireshwar Ganguly, D. Litt.

Vedanta means the philosophy of the highest knowledge; Vedanta offers the best ideal in the information age. The world has entered the third wave of civilization, after the second wave of industrial revolution. In this computer age of electronic revolution, management has attained a critical dimension. Management means management of organization. Organization may be of family, business or nation: Everywhere there is the problem of human relation. Human relation improves when we know our destination. Our destination is to be happy by making others happy. This is possible only when we accept Vedantic philosophy. Every religion has its four essential pillars, e.g. theology, mythology, ethics and rituals. Ethics offers the highest common factor and similarities are found in the ethical sector. Vedantic scriptures are of three types or *Prasthān.* The Upanishads are called the *Shruti Prasthān.* They offer the perrenial philosophy of Vedanta. *Nyaya Prasthān Brahmasutra* is a logical treatise. It reconciles all Upanishadic anomalies. Vedantic ethics is propounded in *Bhagavad Gita.* It is also found in *Mahābhārat* and *Manu Samhitā* known, as *Smriti Prasthān.* The moral code of *Gitā* is meant for divine players. It synthesizes social welfare with personal desires, integration of the secular with spiritual life. All these are found in the *niśkām karma yogi's* life. *Karma* becomes *Yoga* when to God offered, *Karma* becomes *nishkāma*, if to self-interest social good is preferred. No worker can claim the full fruit of his labours. His work produces surplus value for others. Others are also part and parcel of the Divine. 'Work done mainly for social welfare is not thine. Thou art an actor in God's social drama. Worldly activities are also offerings to Rama'. The *Varnas* are based on qualities and aptitudes. They are not hereditary. This view is Gita's certitude. The Brāhmin is a *Jnan Yogi* for intellectual pursuit. He can also indulge in spiritual pursuit. The *Kshatriaya* shall fight and rule on earth; the *Vaishya* shall produce wealth for home and hearth. The *shudra* shall offer labour in factory and farm, and shall not indulge in activities of social harm. Business management covers all the above four. Capital and organization cannot function without labour. For successful business all three must be efficient. And all three must be honest and proficient. Capital should be supplied through honest savings. Labour should be offered through honest strivings. Manager is an administrator in a

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business firm. He is a *Kshatriya;* his aim is the social concern. He may have high intelligence quotient, but he will not succeed without high emotional quotient. High emotional quotient shall be supplied by Vedanta. Vedantic ethics is the practical aspect of Vedanta. By adopting the *Karma Yoga* of Gitā's Sacrament, wealth and prosperity shall be assured to management.

Public administration to-day has dropped the values of life. There is all-around selfishness, corruption and strife. To make administration conform to norms of social welfare, it is necessary to imbibe the values of Vedanta to inspire. Without Vedantic ethics of divinized soical service, corrupt administration will lead the nation to precipice. Practical Vedantic ethics is found in principles of *Rājdharma,* as mentioned in *Manu Smriti* and *Mahabhārat Shānti Parva.* The ideal code of conduct as enunciated for rulers, should be adopted by modern administrators and ministers. For achieving this goal the ideals of life need re-orientation, for which *Bhagavad Gitā* gives the best practical presentation.

II. VEDANTIC ETHICS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT :

There are four ideals of Hindu life, viz, *dharma* (morality), *artha* (economic activity), *Kāma (sexual* life) and *moksha (liberation* from desire). *Kautilya,* in his *Arthashāshtra,* admitted only the first three for social and political action, for the last is relevant only for a few highly evolved individuals. However, he emphasized the role of *dharma* (righteous conduct) even for economic, political and biological activities, in order that a civilized civil society may function.

Vedantic ethics from the days of the Vedas to the period of *Mahābhārata* war was affirmative and not escapist. Escapism crept in later on through the influence of Buddhism and *Mayavadi Vedanta* of Shankarāchārya.

The following eight formulae of Vedantic scriptures capture the essential elements of Hindu code of conduct, based on the perennial philosophy of Vedanta :-

1. Everything, animate or inanimate in this universe is the habitation of God. One should enjoy life in a spirit of renunciation and sacrifice and should not covet the possession of others.

   (*Ishopanishad,* 1/1)

2. Perform only such pure duties, which are beneficial to others. Abhor such acts which are detrimental to the society. We should follow the precepts of morality.

   (*Taittiriya Upanishad,* 1/11/2)

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3. God utters through the sound of thunder cloud, (*Da, Da, Da,* ... control your senses, give away your surplus possession in charity and have compassion for others.

(*Brihadāranyak Upanishad,* 5/2/3)

4. Ten qualities of a religious man are :
(a) Patience (b) forgivenes, (c) non stealing, (d) non-convetousness (e) purity of body and mind, (f) control over the senses (g) wisdom, (h) learning, (i) truthfullness, (i) control of anger.

(*Manusmritri,* 6/92)

5. The perennial duty of the righteous man is to behave with others in a non-violent way in action, speech and thought, as well as to have mercy and charity.

(*Mahåbhårata, Vanaparva,* 296/34)

6. Devoted each to his own social duty, man can attain the highest perfection. From whom is the evolution of all beings, by whom all the universe is pervaded, worshipping Him (God or Brahman) with his own moral duty, man can attain liberation (perfection).

(*Bhagavad Gitā,* XVIII/45-46)

7. Thy right is to work only; but never to the fruits thereof. Be thou not the producer of the fruits of (thy) action; neither let thy attachment be towards inaction.

(*Bhagavad Gita* II/47)

8. Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest in sacrifice, Whatever thou givest away, whatever austerity thou practisest, O, son of Kunti, do that as an offering unto Me.

(*Bhagavad Gita,* IX/27)

We see from the brief discussion of Hindu ethics above, that the derogatory Marxian epithet of 'religion as an opiate to life' does not apply to the vibrant, dynamic religion of the Hindus.

Christian ethics and economic developmEnt :

The marxian analogy of opium for reigion may be applicable to the Roman Catholic code of conduct which is escapist and other-worldly in nature, but not to the Protestantism of Martin Luther, which was the corner-stone of the ideology of reformation, renaissance as well as the industrial revolution. The rise of capitalism was possible in England, France and Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, because of the protestant emphasis on abhorence of luxury, encouragement of savings, honest and efficient labour and industriousness. As

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against the old Chistian dictum 'It is easier for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich man to reach the gates of heaven', the Protestant dictum was : 'Heaven is not a dumping ground for the failures on earth. 'The ideal policy for protestant merchants and industrialists was : 'Honesty is the best policy.' Japanese capitalists also adopted this ideal, but unfortunately for merchants, industrialists and bureaucrats of India today the Popular motto is:' 420 is the best policy'.

Ethics in decision making :

Now-a-days in successful western as well as eastern business enterprises, ethical considerations are an important criterion in organizational decision-making. The most popular ethical decision criterion is the utilitarian criterion, in which decisions are made solely on the basis of their consequences. "The goal of utilatarianism is to provide the greatest good for the greatest number. This view tends to dominate business decision making. It is consistent with goals like efficiency, productivity, and high profits. (Stephen P. Robbins : *Organizational Behaviour,* 10th ed, 2003,2nd Indian Reprint, 2004, Pearson Education, Delhi, P, 1443). According to Robbins, 'an organizational culture most likely to shape high ethical standards is one that is high in risk tolerance, low to moderate in aggressivness, and focuses on means as well as outcomes. Management can adopt a combination of the following practices to create a more ethical culture : (Ibid : Pp. 538-539).

a. Be a visible role model;
b. Communicate ethical expectations;
c. Provide ethical training;
d. Visibly reward ethical acts and punish unethical ones;
e. Provide protective mechanisms.

Robbins has gone to the extent of suggesting spirituality for improving modern organizational culture, for "we have now come to realize that the study of emotions improves our understanding of organizational behaviour" and hence "an awareness of spirituallity can help you to better understand employee behaviour in the twenty-first century. (*Ibid:* P.542). He suggests the following reasons for emphasizing spiritual values:

a. As a counterbalance to the pressures and stress of a turbulent pace of life;
b. To provide an answer to the meaning of work;
c. The desire to integrate personal life values with one's professional life. (*Ibid,* P. 543).

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the power of positive thinking in managerial motivation :

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the world civilization is passing through the third wave of civilization, ushered in by the electronic and computer revolution. We have seen how the ethics of Protestant Christianity helped in motivating successful capitalist entrepreneurs during the industrial revolution of the second wave of civilization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Success in business as well as administration lies in the confident positive thinking of managers, entrepreneurs and administrators.

Vedantic ethics as propounded in *Bhagavad Gitā* can successfully supply the positive thinking needed for successful managers and administrators. The ethics of reformed Christianity also is akin to that of *Leelavādi Vedanta,* as found in *Bhagavad Gitā.* Norman Vincent Peale in his international best-seller, *'The Power of Positive Thinking,'* (Norman Vincent Peale : *The Power of Positive Thinking,* Pub: Simon & Schuster, Inc, 1987, Hindi Trans;: *Sakārātmak Soch Ki Shakti,* Pub. Manjul Publishing House, Bhopal, 2003) has narrated, innumerable examples of proper managerial motivation, leading to success in business by emphasizing the following sermons of the Bible: -

1. Phillipians - 4:13, - "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me".
2. Mathew - 9:29 - "According to your faith be it unto you."
3. Romans - 8:31 - "If God be for us, who can be against us ?"
4. Luke - 17:21 - "The Kingdom of God is within you."
5. Mathew - 17:20 - "For verily I say unto you, if ye have fath as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

the concepts of dharma and rajdharma in mahabharat and manusmriti :

Introduction : It is difficult to translate the term 'dharma' as used in the *Mahābhārata* and *Manusmriti.* The term *dharma* conveys different meanings at different places, viz. religion, faith, virtue, religious merit, morality, righteousness, duty, law, justice, spirituality, etc, and *adharma* conveys contrary meanings of them. However, the chief motive of Maharshi Veda Vyasa in writing the great epic of *Mahabharata* seems to be the glorification of *dharma* and the aim of the war of Kurukshetra was the establishment of the Kingdom based on *dharma.*

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Veda Vyas has classified *dharma into swadharma, nishkama dharma, rajadharma, yoddha dharma,* etc. to reconcile diverse actions of *dharma* found in the ideal characters of the epic. The concept of moral duty runs as an under-current in the use of the different terms, though the actions of the characters show the relative nature of dharma under different circumsatances. The glory of *dharma* and the good actions coming out of it are proclaimed by the poet through the utterrances of Yudishthira, Dhritarashtra, Kunti, Draupadi, Narad, Vidura, Bhisma, Krishna, Gandhari and many others.

The qualities and duties of a good king are found in the *Rajadharma* section of the *Shantiparva* of *Mahābhārata,* wherein Bhisma Pitāmaha, the grandsire of the Kauravas and *Pandavas*, delineates the qualities of good Kings and duties of Kings, in answer to questions put to him by Yudhishthira. As we find a clear concept of *dharma* in the sixth chapter on 'Āshrama *dharmānushashan'* of *Manusmriti*, so we find a detailed and clear description of *rajadharma* in the seventh, eighth and ninth chapters of *Manusmriti*. Other ancient texts on *rajadharma* are *Shukrantiti, Vidurprajagar and* Chanakya's *Arthshastra.*

However, the qualities and duties of Kings, as described in all the above texts are meant for a monarchical form of government of ancient patriarchal and feudal societies and apparently not for modern democracies, though the concepts of *dharma* in general and *swadharma* in particular are meant for universal application and are relevant for the individuals even to-day.

the Concept of Dharma in Manusmriti :

In the sixth chapter on *Āshramādharmanushāshana* of the Manusmriti the ten characteristics of dharma are prescribed for Brahmins :

चतुर्भिरपि चैवेतैर्नित्यमाश्रमिभुर्द्विजै: ।
दशलक्षणको धर्म: सेवितव्य प्रयत्नत: ॥
(6/91)

The ten types of *dharma* (moral duty) should be preformed daily by Brāhmins very carefully in all the four *ashramas* of life viz. *Brahmacharya* (student-life), *garhasthya* (the householder's life), *Vanaprastha* (retired life) and *sannyasa* (the mendicant's life). According to some commentators, the dwija (twice born) is found not only among *Brahmanas*, but also among *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas,* all of whom must pass through the four stages of life to attain the four *vargas* or *Purusharthas* (goals) of life, viz. *artha* (wealth), *Kama* (sex), *dharma* (moral duty) and *moksha* (salvation or self-realisation).

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In the next shloka the ten types or characteristics of *dharma* are clearly stated as follows :

धृतिः क्षमा दमोरस्तेय शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकः धर्मलक्षणम् ॥
(6 / 92)

The ten types of moral duties are : (1) patience and perseverance, (2) forgiveness (3) non-covetousness, (5) purity of body and mind, (6) control over the senses, (7) enlightened intellect or wisdom, (8) learning, (9) truthfulness, and (10) control over anger or attainment of equanimity.

If the majority of men could cultivate the above qualities of *dharma*, the society would become an ideal place to live in and the *dandaniti* and *rajadharma* would take care of the few who would violate the norms of *dharma* and indulge in anti- social activities.

[To continue]

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THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

— P.C. Mehta

[Continued from before]

The 'Theravada School' or 'the doctrine of the elders', of Hinayana Buddhism':

This is the later stage of Hinayana Buddhism and its only surviving form.

1. Canonical Literature :

The first council of the disciples of Buddha called elders, met at Rajagrha near Magadha. They started collecting the doctrine, consisting of *'Tripitaka'* or three baskets. They are,

a) The 'Sutta', containing five groups of collections called *'Nikayas'*. They deal with the 'dhamma' or doctrines in the form of tales and conversations of Buddha. They deal with the practical methods for spiritual attainment. 'Dhammapada' the Buddhist bible forms part of this 'Sutta-Pitaka'.

b) The *'Vinaya'* which deals with the discipline of the monks and

c) The *'Abhidhamma'* are the philosophical discussions. They deal with *'dhamma'* or the same subjects as the Suttas, and include Buddha's psychology and ethics, but in technical and scholastic terms.

The entire canonical works were completed by 241 B.C. which was the date of the third council during the reign of King Asoka.

We now sketch the main features of the Pali Buddhistic literature. From this literature, we glean the doctrine of the Elders, which is the surviving form of the so-called *'Hinayana'* or lesser vehicle.

We have mentioned in para. 5 that in his first sermon at Sarnath, Buddha dwelt upon the *'Arya-Satya'*, i.e. 'The Four Noble Truths'. The account that has come down to us of these Truths is now taken to represent, a later stage of the teaching.

2. The doctrine of *'Dharma'*:

'Dharma' in its ethical sense is moral rectitude and is described by Buddha as 'The lamp of life' *Lankavatara Sutra'* describes *Dhamma* as *'Guna Dravya Purvaka Dhamma'* i.e. *Dhammas* are those that are allied with qualities and substances.

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According to *'Atthasalini'*, *Dhamma desana'* means religious teaching. In Buddhism, *'Dhamma'* is used to connote the following.

i) Moral rectitude ii) Scriptural texts,
ii) Quality or 'Guna', iii) Cause or 'Hetu',
iv) Unsubstantial i.e. *'Nissatta'* and soulless i.e. *'Nijjiva'*.

3. *Dharma'*- as 'The four noble truths':

Buddha's doctrine or 'Dharma' is summed up in four Noble Truths:

i) Life is *'Dukhkha'* i.e. suffering. This means that life as ordinarily lived is suffering. Man ordinarily lives within the subject-object split, which is the root of desire or craving or grasping.

ii) The origin of suffering lies in *'Tanha'* i.e. craving or grasping. That suffering has an origin means a belief in a cause. A dozen links of cause and effect, called *'nidana'* are already mentioned in para.3. This chain is 'Sansara' which is the chain of birth, death and rebirth. The first two links show that the activity of past life prompted by ignorance gave rise to the present. The next eight links deal with the present and the last two links refer to birth and suffering that will follow from the activities of the present life. Thus from ignorance proceeds desire, desire leads to activity which brings rebirth with its fresh desires. This vicious circle is *'bhava-cakra'* or 'the wheel of existence'.

iii) The cessation of suffering is possible through the cessation of *'Tanha'* or craving. Since removal of cause removes the effect, when ignorance is dispelled by cessation of *'Tanha'*, the chain snaps because as we have seen the necessity is not absolute.

iv) The way to cessation of suffering is by right insight, which is enlightenment about the true nature of one's self, gained through the noble eight-fold path.

We might mention at this stage that a simpler scheme for cessation of suffering found in old Buddhism consists of *'Prajnā'* of the four-fold truth. *'Prajna'* here means direct insight or immediate understanding as opposed to theoretical or mediate knowledge. Man should win salvation through self-reliance, not grace of God. This adage points to the fact that all the help may not come to fruition till man acquires immediate understanding. For immediate understanding to come about, *'sila'*, *'yoga'* and *'sāmadhi'* are the steps. There can be no perception of the truth without control of thought and action. *'Sila'* means right conduct which includes virtues like veracity, contentment and *'ahinsa'* or non-injury. *'Sāmādhi'* is

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meditation on the four verities. Diverse forms of Yogic exercises are recommended. Theoretical knowledge marks the beginning of the discipline.

The concept of right living differs in the case of a monk and a layman. The mode of life to be followed depends on ones capacity and inclination. Ultimate release is attained only after one becomes a monk.

In a monk's life also success comes by following the middle path of neither self-indulgence, nor self-mortification. Buddha's theory strikes a mean between believing neither in Being nor in Non-being but in becoming. Similarly it does not believe in chance or exclusive necessity but in conditioned happening.

The following are the constituents of the Noble eightfold path, referred to by Buddha as the Middle Path or the Golden Mean of avoiding the two extremes of indulgence and suppression. They are recommended for attaining enlightenment.

I) Right View, ii) Right aspiration, iii) Right speech, iv) Right and moral conduct, (or *'sila')* v) Right livelihood, vi) Right effort, vii) Right mindfulness, viii) Right contemplation. (or *'samādhi)*

Out of these, *'sila'* or 'right and moral conduct', and *'samadhi'* or 'right contemplation' are the most important elements. Right conduct and right meditation are the two fundamentals for right insight which brings emancipation.

4. ***Sila* and *Samadhi:***

We are entwined all through by desire *'Tanha jāla'*. We can extricate from it only by *'Sila'* or right moral discipline and *'Samadhi'* or right meditation leading to concentration and *'Panna'* or wisdom.

A. ***'Sila' :***

'Sila' means *'Sabba-papassa-akaranam'* meaning 'not doing any sinful act as well as being free from all sins'. In other words it involves all mental states and effort to remain on the right path. These are,

i) 'Cetanā or right resolve,

ii) *'Cetasikā'* right mental states which lead to right resolve,

iii) *'Samvara'* or mental composure leading to self-control,

iv) *'Aviti-kkāma'* which is not compromising with the above resolve either in mind, speech or action.

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v) *'Ahare-patikkula-sanna'* to view with aversion the desires for eating and drinking, by reflecting on their unpleasant metamorphosis. Thus the *sadhaka* looses attachment for eating and drinking and eats and drinks only to maintain the body for *sadhana.*

vi) *'Catu-dhatu-vavatthana-bhavana'*, to give up attachment to the body by viewing or meditating upon the body as made up of the four elements of *'ksiti'* or earth, *'ap'* or water, *'tejas'* or fire and *'vayu'* or air, no different from the carcase of an animal.

vii) *'Anu-ssati'*, to constantly contemplate on the virtues or greatness of Buddha, the Sangha and the Dhamma and the good effects of *Sila'*.

viii) *Caganu-ssati'*, or the desirability of making gifts.

ix) *'Marananu-ssati'*, or the nature of death and

x) *'Upasamanu-ssati'*, to dwell upon the deep nature and qualities of the final extinction of all phenomena.

Samādhi :

'Upacara Samadhi' means the practical method of meditation process leading to *Jhana samadhi'*. It has to start with the practices of *'Sila'* and must proceed as follows.

B.'Appana samadhi' :

a) *'Asubha kammatthana'*, which is an effort at leading the mind away from the body by seeing the impurities of human bodies by going to the cremation grounds and observing the changes in human carcases and realizing that in essence it is the same in the living form.

b) *'Kayagata sati'*, is the continuous mindfulness about the nature of the body.

c) *'Anapana sati'*, To sit in a quiet place and fix the mind in the *'passasa'* i.e. inhaling and *'Assasa'* exhaling process. To be conscious of the entire process of inhaling and exhaling.

d) *'Brahma-vihara'* is the fourfold meditation of a) *'Metta'* or universal friendship, b) *'Karuna'* or universal compassion, c) *'Mudita'* happy disposition through wishing the happiness of all, d) *'Upekkha'* i.e. treating alike oneself, friend, enemy or third party.

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e) *'Kasinam'* or *Jhanas'* through the help of material things. Here recommended concentration is on a) earth, b) water, c) fire, d) wind, e) blue color, f) yellow color, g) red color, h) white color, i) light or j) *Paricchinn-akasa'* or limited space.

When the sadhaka finds that he can visualize the object even when his eyes are closed, he can leave the object and concentrate on it without its physical presence. Then the following procedure is adopted.

i) *'Pathamam-jhanam'*, or the earlier stage of meditation.

a) It begins with *'Vitakka'* or discursive meditation. Here the mind is concentrated in understanding its form and name through its diverse relations.

b) *'Vicara'* or 'steadily moving'. Here, the mind does not move in the object in relational terms but permeates it by settling down in the object without quivering.

c) The mind fixed in these two states feels *'Piti'* or buoyant exaltation and

d) *'Sukha'* or inward bliss.

e) *'Ekāggata'* or concentration follows.

When the fifth stage of *'Ekāggata'* is reached, this first *'Jhana'* roots out the six ties of

1) *'Avijja'*, 2) *'Kamacchando'* or playing with desires, 3) *'Vyapado'* or hatred, 4) *'Thinamiddham'* or laziness, 5) *'Uddhaccakukkuccam'* or pride and restlessness and 6) *'Vicikiccha'* or doubt.

ii) ***'Dutiyam-Jhanam'.***

a) *Ekodi-bhavam':* Here the mind has gone beyond the *'Vitakka'* and *'Vicara'* states and is in an unruffled steady state but has in it the *'piti'*, *'Sukha'*. and *Ekaggata.'*

b) *'Upekkhako':* Here the *'Piti'* stage is left and though the mind sees the objects, it is neither pleased or displeased. The mind is indifferent. This is the stage of *'khin-asava";* where the asavas are loosened. The *'Sukha'* and *'Ekaggata'* continues and the mind has to be alert to see that it does not go back to *'Piti.* Concentration on the chosen object continues.

iii) ***'Upekkha'*** and ***'Ekaggata':***

This is the last stage or *Jhana'*. Here the *"Sukha'* or happiness and *'Dukkha'* or misery vanish and the roots of all attachments and antipathies are burnt up. This

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is a state of total indifference. With this comes *'Cetovimutti'* or complete extinction of *'Citta'*, and the sadhaka becomes *'Arhat'*. The ideal of *'Arhan'* or The worthy one' is also in *Jainism.*

5) The ideal of *"Arhan'* and not of *'Bodhisatva':*

The final attainment is *'Nibbana'* or release or extinction.

Such a person is freed from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. As such the ideal for the *'Theravada'* school is that of *'Arhan'*.

Some claim that this ideal amounts to annihilation of the individual, (see @ VI. 8.6) instead of realizing one's identity with the absolute behind the flux, as in *Mahayana Buddhism.* This does not appear to be the correct view. In 'Kathamrta' (Vol. iii. p.8), Buddha says, 'There is an unborn, an unoriginated, an unmade, an uncompounded: were there not, O mendicants, there would be no escape from the world of the born, the originated, the made and the compounded'. This obviously refers to the permanent principle behind the evanescent. Secondly it is impossible intellectually to comprehend that inexpressible state. (see also para 30)

In *Mahayana Buddhism* there has now developed a further ideal; the ideal of *'Bodhisatva'* that is the ideal of working for the salvation of mankind after coming to enlightenment.

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THE DIVINE MOTHER

— Dr. Premlata Srivastav

The purpose of Ma's descent on this universe has been to enrich and enhance the tradition of spiritual culture with Her divine aura and grace. The innumerable tales of Her Leela will forever remain contemporary to the people of this universe.

Ma Anandmoyi is a name synonymous with spiritual awakening in the world. She Herself was so completely detached and indifferent like the limitless sky, yet everyone was attracted to Her. And she responded with profound love and respect for all, irrespective of their caste, creed or religion. She considered all, whether human beings, plants, trees, birds or animals, weaved into the united whole, exuding the *Akhand Bhav*.

Waves of happiness ran across the massive crowds that gathered for Ma's darshan. They waited with utmost sincerity and immense perseverance. With Ma's darshan, thousand of those devotees would instantly tune themselves in a new found happiness. This treasury of boundless joy of Ma was open for all. Her divine glance and smiles, and Her infinite flow of pity and compassion attracted anybody and everybody. For one such glance of the Mother, the personification of compassion, people waited for hours together. Ma had a wonderful knack to bring people closer to Her. Ma befriended people of different, diverse culture, habit and creed as if she knew them for ages, 'and each of us thought Ma liked and loved me the most'. The reason for this feeling is that Ma actually was the soul of all of us.

The ever infectious smile of Ma swept the devotees, who lost their self during such drashans. When Ma laughed, each and every molecule of Her body laughed. As Her whole body stirred during those laughters, people wondered whether such divine exultation is ever possible for a human being!

The words emanating from Sri Ma were captivating. Her words and Her songs electrified the innermost core of the audience in attendance. It was a current of joy and happiness that generated. from the wonderful rendering. Ma's voice reverberated.

Though she always regarded Herself a child, but at every moment— in Her speech, song, smile, giggle, crackle, laughter, in every posture, in every pause of Her movement, there was an air of infinite, unexplainable sweetness and happiness. One darshan would have prompted the devotee to desire for repeated

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darshans. She Herself has said' who ever has once been drawn to love this body will never succeed in wiping out its impression despite hundreds of attempts."

No propaganda, no public speeches. Neither did she gave diksha nor made disciples but with every darshan, she gave the devotees a sea of happiness. Her devotees were from every walk of life. From common people to renowned pandits, political leaders, rulers and bureaucrates, doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc of all creed, clan and religion and faith. They all came either out of want, curiosity, indistress or anything else and returned with coffers. This was divine peace amid din and chaos.

In Ma's presence, there were always some festivity or the other and the crowd of curious visitors. Massive crowds, but managed them so deftly ! It was Ma's attraction which drew people from near and far, time and again for that divine company. There have been several instances in which devotees worshipping, meditating or praying at Ma's feet have gained a kind of power and closeness to Ma.

Ma's enigmatic personality attracted commoners householders and vedantist pandits, Mahatmas alike. When she spoke about the supreme knowledge and wisdom Her few words sounded like the words of vedas. though she had hardly any formal education. Ma's sayings are found to be exactly as mentioned in the Shastras. Her speech has illuminated the dark alleys of life to guide people to the spiritual bliss.

Ma never went for debated solutions, nor did she impose anything on Her devotees. But when she discussed 'Bhakti' she personified it. It was for Her devotees to draw as much as they can from the Mother of the Universe. Someone got profound wisdom, someone else wealth, some other has got the path to stoicism from the divine self. But nobody has returned empty-handed.

Ma had all the pleasures at Her disposal but she was indifferent to them as she was always absorbed in the supreme bliss. An old devotee of Ma, Pannalaji, had once asked Her.

"After the bath in holy Ganges, people take home the sacred water containers matching their capacity. And I take the water in my curved palms. By the time, I reach home the water trickles out of the gaps in between the fingers. Nothing is left, that's how my condition is after I leave this place."

Ma quipped : "Baba, but your palms remain wet!

The comments of revered Mahamahopadhya Gopinath Kaviraji is worth mentioning in this context—

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"She is extremely dear to the wistful Sadhak as well as for the dispassionate Sadhak. The one who is lustful, wants the pleasures. He is not attracted toward Ma but Her riches and wealth. Ma too gives him what he wants. She manifests Herself in the form he desires. But the Sadhak who is dispassionate, disturbed and distressed', who doesn't have any lust or desires but wants salvation, Ma relieves this sadhak from the bondage of the world.

Her supernatural divine personality is reflected in Her several bewitching bewildering Leelas.

From earthly point of view, Sri Sri Ma was an ideal daughter, an ideal wife and then the ideal Mother for thousands of Her devotees. She played the role of a housewife, administrator, friend to mention a few but ultimately Ma remained Ma, the embodiment of happiness "Universal Motherhood".

Ma's sympathy, compassion, pity and candour for the human beings are unparallel.

The fact that Ma was present in the ashram was a source of immense pleasure, even without Her darshan. Ma would suddenly come out in public gaze, crackling and giggling and then the next moment will be vanished. This game of hide and seek by Ma has generated a flow of a titillating sensation in which countless wiseman, sadhak, sanyasis, family people, sinners, and afflicted persons have batted to purify themselves.

Ma was afterall, the mother of all.

Despite the din and chaos of the crowd of the devotees, Ma spent hours, sitting at the same place, Her face exuding that inexplicable charm and the atmosphere seized by an infinite happiness. Ma was always present in a unique detached mood.

In all situations, she was firm and composed. All Her manifestations and illuminations were with complete Bhav, in totality. Ma's nature was so benign that everyone who came in Her contact, considered himself or herself closest to Her. Without hesitation, the devotees offered their utmost at Her divine feet and enriched themselves with Her divine advice.

Whether visitng a king's palace or a commoner's thatched hut, whether alone or amidst a massive crowd, she had, in fact, no inclination for any particular thing. Those who were in Her constant company also, did not know when will Ma leave them.

Ma had no bondage. She could effortlessly shatter Her own empire and go away smiling in a split moment, leaving the devotees mourning Her absence.

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Life Introduction (1896-1918)

(a) The Divine Descent

*Kheora, a tiny village in the interior of East Bengal of un-divided India (now in Bangladesh) suddenly came in limelight with the advent of Universal Mother, Ma Anandmoyee. She took birth at Kheora, as a human being in a poor brahmin family on 30th April 1896, at about 3 O'clock when the world was fast asleep.

She was the second child of her parents and scared by the death of their first child her deeply religious mother would lay her infant daughter daily below the Tulsi shrub (a kind of basil tree regarded as very pious in Hindu Mythology) invoking the blessings of the sacred tulsi on her. When the infant grew up she herself used to go and roll down there.

This little child was given the name of Nirmala Sundari Devi by their parents, who is now known to the world as Sri Ma Anandmayee or simply 'Ma'. Hence forth she will be referred here as 'Ma' only.

Ma's father Sri Bipin Behari Bhattacharya was a highly religious man with an ascetic allegiance. The most remarkable feature of his personality was a total apathy to the worldly interests. Eye witnesses say that he had long hairs and a shinning bearded face full of contention and an inborn liking for God. He had a beautiful sonorous voice and used to play Ektara (single string instrument) while singing which lasted hours and hours together and sometime it would be dawn before this devoted soul finished singing hymns of various schools. People loved to attend his kirtans and songs wherever he sang with his melodious voice.

Ma's mother Mokshada Sundari Devi (Didi Ma) was also an extremely pious lady, very religious, calm and serene with an ever smiling face. None has ever seen her in anger. The contentment and patience were her outstanding qualities.

The extreme poverty of theirs, never worried her and any guest at anytime was always welcomed by her. She was pure and pristine as Lotus in a pond. Before Ma's descent she had seen several Gods and Godesses in her dreams whom she felt were keen to come to her lap.

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* Kheora village is now in Distt. Brahman Baria in Bangla Desh. In 1927, Ma with Bhola Nath and her parents went to Kheora. By this time everything was changed so even Didima and Dada Moshai could not find out the place and then Ma showed to them and then they also could recollect. With Didi's and Moulvi Prem Gopal's efforts this land was purchased for Ashram. On 17th Feb' 1984, a delegation of few devotees went there including myself. We were moved by the hearty reception given by the muslims of that village. They beautifully sang a welcome song and said "Ma is our Mother also, our own Mother."

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Didima continued to witness several Gods and Godesses in her dream even after Ma was born. Even when she was carrying Ma she had an ill-health. Nevertheless neighbours said— she is looking much beautiful and shinning.

One day Mokshada Devi lighted a lamp at the altar of Tulsi. Suddenly she discovered a marvellous sight of an extremely beautiful Goddess with a wonderful glow of the rising sun, standing in front of her instead of Tulsi. A few moments later, a fascinating ray had replaced the Goddess. The rays travelled in a circular way and entered the body of Mokshada Sundari. She lost her conscience and fell down at Tulsi Manch.

It was heard from Didi Ma that contrary to the normal child neither did Ma cry nor did she make any other noise. Afterwards, to this Ma said "why to cry? I was looking at the mango and neem trees through the holes of the thatched hut."

[To continue]

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FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

— "Kirpal"

Dehradun Ashram, 14th March, 1966

Shree Ma stops in front of the Kishenpur Ashram gate and then proceeds towards "Kalyanban". All do Pranam. Shree Ma returns. She asks Br. Sushil — you must get your stomach ache cured, you have been eating rotis — now you should eat rice and vegetables and curd, the best is curd in water, in the morning.

Then Shree Ma asks about Sunanda's food. He should have rotis in the daytime and milk at night.

Then about the new boy Gaur — He is not to clean all the vessels. He is not a servant. He is a brahmachari, like Jogesh, Manindra.

Then as the ashram girls are late for the 10:30 a.m. reading of the Holy scriptures, etc., Shree Ma said, "If one is not strict in following the rules and regulations, one cannot advance on the spiritual path. Similarly in worldly matters".

Rajmata Tehri comes for a brief visit on her way to Mussoori. Sri. Charu Banerjee's son Gopal comes. At the very time of his father's death, at Vrindaban, kirtan was being held. He had had the Gopal *Murti* installed at the Vrindaban ashram.

Shree Ma said, "Saffron and sandalwood are ground together and then added with washed sesamum seeds and then put on each tulsi leaf, and such 1008 leaves were offered in the puja. Everything should be done at the appropriate time. This increases one's intensity for the realisation of God. It should not be even one minute this way, that way. You should get up early in the morning. If this body says to do some work, and if some other program is already there, then you should say "Ma, we have to attend the program". As you have followed a disciplined manner in worldly matters for ages, for so many births, similarly in spiritual matters also you should do likewise. As the sun rises in the morning and at night darkness prevails; that is the rule. You have been to school, college and office. You have followed the disciplines. Why don't you do so now ? The ashram girls can do everything together".

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After sometime a learned pandit, cousin of Sri. Atalda, known as the Sun of East Bengal, comes to Ma.

Shree Ma to Smt. Lakshmi Tankha — "You made such a face, making everyone cry. You have become a loud speaker".

Lakshmiji — "It does not occur to me".

Shree Ma — "I will scold you. You should not be so attached to the world. Everyone has brought his own luck, and that one has to suffer. Whatever God does is beneficial".

Then Smt. Darshi's son, Ravi, who was in the war, came. He told Ma, that in the fighting, one of the sepoys shot a Pakistani woman, who refused to divulge information. As she died, she uttered "Hey Rama". Shree Ma said, "she attained salvation". Ravi said to his upset sepoy that some Hindu maybe one of the abducted women, and in her last moments the influence of her previous birth was revealed. Then Ravi said that with them was a Professor, who was a very learned man, a Captain from the Territorial Army. When they got depressed, he would recite a verse from the Gita or the Mahabharata, and so many times they thought they had been shot, but out of the smoke they would appear, reciting the Gita.

Shree Ma said to Ravi, "The Gita has saved you. Now you must read the Gita daily and keep remembering it in your mind".

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WITH MOTHER IN THE KUMBH MELA

— Shraddha Davenport

[Four]

The next morning, January nineteenth, was the main bath day. At about 3:00 a.m. a rain drop fell on my face. Then another fell on my face. Then another fell on my sleeping bag. Our roof was leaking. According to tradition the rain falling at that time made the day even more auspicious.

When our alarm rang at 4:30 a.m., Satya was feeling worse. We talked about going to the bath, but the thought of a two-hour pre-dawn walk in the rain, followed by a cold dip, required more stamina than we had at that time. At 8:00 a.m. returning from my short constitutional down the fire road, I found Jayananda at our hut. He had gone for the bath and brought a little bottle of that holy water back for us. He was soaking wet and muddy but was in very good spirits.

Krishnapriya came to our door with a long stick carved little grooves in the mud from the door toward the fire road gutter. Laughing as she played barefoot in the mud, she said her engineering feat would drain the water away from our hut. Her shoes had been lost as she walked back from the bath in the mud. Nandi Kumar went to buy new ones for her as she sat with us and told us some of the wonderful experiences that she had with Mother.

The night before, as she sat with a group of people waiting for Mother to come out, she told them that if they wanted Ma they must call Her and She would appear-that She was not the V.I.P. Divine Mother, but Jagat (World) Divine Mother. To demonstrate, Krishnapriya started calling Mother and She came out for a ten-minute darshan. We can take all heart and learn from her pure example. I loved to hear her stories and was blessed many times to see Mother's affectionate play with her.

Nandi Kumar brought the new shoes and Krishnapriya went to see if Mother had come out. Mother did come out for just a few minutes and She asked about us. Krishnapriya told Her that Satya had a stomach sickness and that I was also not feeling well. Krishnapriya returned to our hut with the sweet news that Mother had asked about us and She also brought Mother's prasad. To know that Mother had asked about us was a great joy and warmed our hearts.

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That evening I cut some large plastic bags open, making long strips. Then I tucked those strips above our beds on the inside of our hut's slanted roof. That way any rain water would be carried down and go out from the front. The electricity went out so we visited by torch light when Gadadhar came bringing two sodas for Satya. He sat with us for a while, then as he was leaving Satya asked him to sing a little children's tune which we had heard him sing a few years before. As he walked off into the dark night we could hear him softly singing.

When we awoke from good sleep we both felt better. Thanks to the rain the air was free of dust. Also for the last two nights the loudspeaker next door was silent for the first time since we arrived. We had not realized how healing a quiet sleep could be. After bathing I went to Mother's house for darshan. She did not stay out long as She had been out before I arrived, but at least I got to pronam.

In the early afternoon I went again to see Mother, but the crowd around Her made it impossible to even glimpse Her. Brahmachari Nirmalananda was there and I had a chance to speak with him. He pointed out the joy of the eternal inner connection with Mother. When I saw Chitra I asked if a private was possible. She did not hold out much hope but said that she would ask Mother. Satya had gone to the sadhu camp and returned to our hut at the same time I did. He brought cheese and crackers which some one had purchased for us in Allahabad.

At 5:00 p.m. I got to see Mother briefly. She looked at me sweetly and my heart ached for more, more, more.

Gadadhar came to our hut in the evening. The loudspeaker next door came on at 6:00 p.m. and we had to shout to hear each other. Satya and Gadadhar made two or three visits to that camp and finally spoke with a very compassionate swamiji who turned the speaker down and away from our hut. It was so nice, as then we could enjoy the beautiful bhajans which they broadcast.

The next morning at 9:30 a.m. we watched as Mother's little pandal was made ready for a visit from Mahant. At 10:30 a.m. Mother came out and sat with us for half an hour. When She went inside we returned to our hut.

Jayananda had caught a cold before the bath day, and the long walk in the cold rain had made him pretty sick. He came to our hut and rested on Satya's cot for a while. Dr. Shelat arrived and gave him some medication. We sent Nandi Kumar to get fruit for him too. Then we had very good satsang with Dr. Shelat telling us some of his experiences with Mother. When he left I could hear kirtan coming from Mother's pandal so we went to see if we could have Mother's darshan.

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Not many people were there and we stood at the railing. Mother sat on Her porch and some girls sat near Her. Two men sat on Her other side playing harmonium and drum while they sang sweet bhajans. As Chitra walked near where we stood I asked if we might come into the pandal and sit. She said yes, so we scurried close to Mother and joyfully gazed at Her. She was wearing her coral-colored shawl with a yellow towel at Her throat. She looked absolutely gorgeous!

It was an answer to our prayers to be with Mother as She just sat and enjoyed the lovely kirtan, not talking to anyone, looking at us, smiling, clapping, dancing with Her hands and swaying Her body. She would clap on one beat of the rhythm and then lay Her palms open for next beat. This went on for a long time. When the men stopped playing, Mother asked a lady there to sing. We just soaked up all the sweetness for one and a half hours. As the darshan was ending, Governor Reddy came to see Mother. He was escorted into Her house as we were leaving. I was so intoxicated I could hardly walk.

The effect of that great spiritually-charged atmosphere kept me bouncing like rubber ball. By Mother's infinite grace, I was a rubber ball with a cord attached and no matter how high or low, matter into what I might fall, I could not be lost for the cord was, and is, safely in Her hand.

As I was bathing the next morning, a man came to our door and told Satya that Swami Swarupanandaji had sent him. He said that we should come to the campground by 9:30 a.m. as Prime Minister Indra Gandhi would be coming to see Mother then. The whole area around Mother's camp was teeming with the military. Intelligence agents were also mixing with the crowd, dressed as ordinary men and even as sannyasis. Some soldiers were spraying disinfectant along the edge of our fire road. Only by explaining that I was an asthmatic and by raising my voice a little was I able to dissuade them from spraying their chemicals inside our hut. When they left our area we went near Mother's house to await Mrs. Gandhi's arrival.

An orderly crowd lined both of the driveway leading into Mother's camp. A group of Indian Photographers stood near Mother's pandal and Satya was given ashram permission to stand with them while taking movies. The lead officer decided that Satya might be a security risk and decreed that he should stand across from Mother's pandal on the other side of the road.

By Mother's grace he was in the best spot of all, for when the Prime Minister's convertible car entered the driveway it pulled up to where we stood. When Mrs. Gandhi's car door opened, Satya was standing immediately before her and took

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some very nice movies of her arrival and then a short time later of her departure after having Mother's darshan.

I took polaroid pictures of Bhaskaranandaji and Nirvananandaji who had that day shaved their heads and long beards. We had not recognized them for some time as they looked so completely different.

After the Kumbha Mela Mother was going to Modinagar where a Bhagavat Sapta was scheduled for the late Sri Rai Bahadur G. S Modi. We planned to follow Mother there for the last few days of our trip. Bhaskaranandaji advised us to send a wire to Mrs. Modi requesting her assistance in loor locating accommodations there. Hiring a taxi, we went into Allahabad to send the wire and did a little shopping. It felt so strange to be in town. We had not left the Mela grounds at all in the last eleven days, and it had been fourteen days, since we first entered there.

Happy to be back at our little hut, we put our things away and went to Mother's pandal in hope of seeing Her. A very large crowd was there making it impossible to see Mother at all. We went to our hut for a while then returned to Her and managed to have a short darshan. Mother went into Her house and we waited to see if She would come back out. A few people were allowed to go into Her room, then the Governor arrived and we knew that there was no chance of Her coming back out so we retired to our little hut.

On January twenty-third I awoke early, had a bath, and dressed in my pink rose sari (soon to be the latest "favorite"). As I sat upon my cot waiting for Satya, I was filled with a longing and sadness because I felt there was a great gulf between Mother and myself. I knew that She had showered us with many blessings, but I also knew that I could never be an Indian in this life and had been completely lacking in the ability to learn Hindi so that I could talk directly with Her.

It had been demonstrated to me on many occasions that Mother could raise and lower barriers with a mere flash from Her eyes. I knew that She could dissolve the wall of air which I felt unable to penetrate, and in my frustrated state I recalled how Krishnapriya had called for "Jagat Ma!" and She had appeared. I decided that in my own way I, too, would call for my "Jagat Ma!"

As I have tried to illustrate, the intensity of the whole mela experience had put me in a very tenuous state of mind. Many thoughts and feelings were spiraling to the surface. I wanted to cry out to Her but felt as though trapped inside a soundproof bubble.

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Our only chance to have a private with Mother was in Modinagar and Chitra would not be there. Without her that private which we wished for was not possible.

I told Satya that I had decided to write a letter to Mother telling my innermost feelings, then ask Chitra to read it to Her.

Pouring my heart out, I wrote for both of us how sad and lonely for Her we felt. That it was not our nature to push and shove in order to catch a glimpse of Her who is our God, our Beloved, most intimate to us-not the curiosity which people came to gape at. We wanted to know why we could not just sit at Her feet during our short stay. Why, I asked, when others could come to Her were we kept out?

I told Her how that as a child I had cried, feeling that was not with my people. Then, when coming to India I felt at home, but since that had seen that this was a double-edged sword for I will never be an Indian in this life-so I am a foreigner in the west as well as in the east. I told her that I felt very sad that I was unable to tell Her these things myself. That without the compassion of dear Chitra I would not even be able to tell Her of my feelings. And if She had no further use of us, what should we do?

When it was finished I read it to Satya. He thought that it was correctly stated, so I told him that I would take it directly to Chitra. Near Mother's house I found Swami Paramanandaji and asked him where Chitra was. He said that She had gone into Allahabad last night but would be returning at any moment. Satya joined me and we waited by the railing around Mother's pandal.

As a crowd started to gather, I saw Chitra and rushed to catch up with her. I explained that I could not get private I needed without her to translate so I had written a letter which I beseeched her to read to Mother privately because of its very personal nature. She took my letter, then asked if Shudhananda was at the camp. She said it was his birthday and she was trying to arrange a chance for him to pronam to Mother.

Chitra walked off by herself to read my letter as I waited. Shuddhananda arrived and I told him that Chitra had asked about him. Soon she returned and told that she was working on his request. Then taking me aside she said it was impossible to get Mother alone that my letter was so personal she would most likely have to take it to Varanasi with her and write Mother's reply to me. I felt as if my heart had fallen to my feet, and I am sure that my face must have shown it. She held out no hope to me

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We walked back to our little hut feeling down. I told Satya that many times in the past when I had asked Chitra something, she would say that it was not possible, but then when she tried, Mother would have kheyala on me and grant my petition.

I had walked down the fire road and was returning to our hut when I saw Shuddhananda there at our door. He motioned for me to come there. I hurried, and Satya came out saying that Mother had called for us. Quickly I washed my hands, then we sprinkled Ganga jal upon ourselves and ran to Mother's pandal. Mother sat near the center of the pandal upon a wooden bed. The Mahantji sat near Her. On the carpet, the American men and a few others sat before Mother. Shuddhananda was receiving his birthday blessing and the chance to pronam.

Chitra had given Mother a summary of my letter as She sat there, and Mother had responded by sending for us. Chitra told me to sit near Mother. As I bowed in pronam before Her, She threw a garland over my head and smiled at me. Then She threw another garland in my lap, followed by an apple, another garland, and then an orange. I was in tears.

Satya sat a little bit back and Chitra said for him to come and sit by me. Mother said that the large yellow garlands was for him. As I handed it to him, Mother threw another garland to him, then an apple, an apple, an orange, and yet another apple. We could not keep up with Her. She was smiling and looking so sweet.

Chitra told me that Mother had said, "If you had considered how busy I was, you would not have felt that way."

An Indian gentleman, whom I did not know, was there and he tried to translate words. He told me that when others are with Mother we should be that our brothers and sisters are with Mother. We told him that we always feel happy for them and get much joy from others' relationship with Mother. I told him that I did not understand way Mother would say what he was saying, as it had nothing to do with what I had written Her. Then I tried to illustrate my point of view to him and said, "How can a child be a foreigner to its Mother?" He seemed to have a better grasp of what I was trying to express and told something to Mother.

Mother's reply, as he interpreted it, was, If there is any part [of you] left that does not belong to Ma, you can go that way." I wrote down his words as he tried very hard to express what Mother had said, but felt confused and knew that something was missing. Mother stood smiling and nodding with folded palms we all bowed before Her.

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When She walked into Her house, Sri Ramesh K. Dutta, a photographer from Kashmir, came to where we sat and told me that he wanted to be sure we had understood Mother's words to us-that they were the most beautiful thing he had heard Her say to anyone in many years. He said that he had carefully kept her words because he saw that we were not getting a complete and correct translation.

Sitting there in that little pandal, next to Mother's seat I carefully wrote as he gave me the wonderful words She had spoken.

First She said: "When I come out, everyone can come to me, especially all of you foreigners."

"I always play with you people."

"I keep on playing with everybody."

"I can play with you any way I like."

Then the words which had confused and left me wanting were correctly translated by Rameshji.

She had said: "If you have anything left out, which you have not given to me, then you have that or can go that way]."

"Otherwise you are completely mine."

●

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"Hari-Kathā hi Kathā aur sab vrithā Vyathā"

[To talk of God alone is worthwhile; all else is in vain and leads to pain]

—Ma Anandamayee

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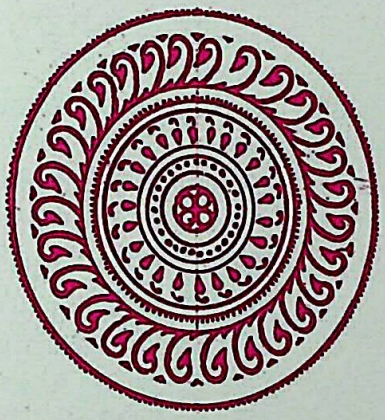
MA ANANDAMAYEE

AMRIT VARTA



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MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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The journal is published in four separate languages—Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati and English, in the months of January, April, July and October. The year begins from January.

The journal mainly publishes articles relating to Sri Ma. Other informative articles on religious literature and Saints and Teachers of any country or religion will also be welcome.

Writings from devotees about their own experiences, not entirely personal or private, throwing some light on Sri Ma's behavioural pattern with people who came close to her, are also specially invited.

All articles must be clearly written, preferably typed, on one side of the sheet only and sent directly to the Managing Editor.

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"Hari-Kathā hi Kathā aur sab vrithā Vyathā"

[To talk of God alone is worthwhile; all else is in vain and leads to pain]

—Ma Anandamayee

Jai Ma to all devotees of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee from the volunteers of **Ma Anandamayee Seva Samiti, Inc. (MASS, Inc.) U.S.A.**

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Jai Ma

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Ma—just before taking her bath in the seas in front of the ashram in Puri (Orissa) in 1954.

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Ku. Chitra Ghosh

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MATRI VANI

Spoken word, verily, must be of Him alone, All else is but futility and pain.

* * * * *

When the mind is centered in God in unbroken awareness there is hope of full vision and revelation.

Endeavour to remain ever consecrated at His Feet by engaging in worship, japa, meditation, the study of sacred books, or in devotional music - whichever of them you feel inclined to at any particular time.

* * * * *

Whether you like it or not, you will have to make the Eternal your constant companion - just like a remedy which has got to be taken.

Verily, of Him is all that need be said, the rest but vanity, woe.

Without loving God you will not get anywhere. Remember this at all times.

* * * * *

When you first began to learn to read and write, you surely did not examine the reasons for and against it, did you ?

You accept what you are told. Even if all sorts of critical thoughts arise, call to mind that they are due only to your lack of understanding : they are certainly not the outcome of pure wisdom. Try to accept as much as possible, appropriate to the occasion. Discard laziness and exert yourself. It is natural that your mind should find all sorts of reasons for not doing *Sadhana* - yet your aim must be to persevere in doing it. Eschew such thought as : "I shall not be able to do it"; "It will not be possible".

Suffering is of the body only. Despite all such discomfort officials and business men attend to their work. How painstaking they are !

Create time for everything.

The purer, the more transparent you can make your mind, the greater the possibilities for spiritual progress.

* * * * *

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Be truthful in every way. Without purity one cannot advance towards God.

* * * * *

Let your mind constantly dwell on the Supreme Reality - endeavour to let your thought be absorbed in THAT.

Be truthful in speech and rigorous in self-discipline at all times and devote yourself to the study of books of wisdom and to *Satsang*. Cultivate the company of those who are helpful in your quest, avoid those that distract you - in other words, associate with the Good and shun the merely pleasurable. If you live in this spirit, the help you need will come to you naturally unasked.

* * * * *

To begin with keep up your habits regarding bath and diet, so that you may get undisturbed sleep. This will make it easy for you to think of God and to meditate. When the body is healthy it helps to fix your mind on Him. As you progress your diet and sleep will automatically undergo certain necessary changes.

* * * * *

Spiritual inquiry has arisen from that which is the source of you and all that is manifest, that is *"Ishwara"*, the Lord of the Universe.

To be sure, there is a way of approach even in terms of gain and loss: not to aspire to God-realization is loss and to aspire to it is gain - although He is Self-luminous. He and He alone is the one thing needful, all the rest is useless. Without Him man cannot live. Leaving Him there is no place to go. Therefore to exclude Him is impossible, He cannot be set aside. Because He is all in all, such is the nature and the mode of His play. Without Him man simply cannot proceed. He alone is. Through delusion you forget Him, all trouble is due to ignorance alone.

If man endeavours to live his life in the world according to *"dharma"*, (the dictates of religion and righteousness), he will gradually overcome sorrow and will progress towards peace. Without Him Supreme Peace cannot be found.

●

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH MA

[Translated from Bengali]

— Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka,August 20th, 1939

Sadek Khan, the Personal Assistant to the Commissioner called on Ma along with two other Deputy Magistrates. Ma was told that when She had been to Coxbazar, Sadek had been the Sub-Divisional Officer there. Ma told him :

"Baba, just as you receive a pension for working in your job, there is also a pension on this Path. In your present position, however much you may earn, you will never be able to satisfy all your wants. World means *duniya,* i.e. based on duality. Therefore there is happiness and sorrow, light and darkness, virtue and sin : The one is never without the other. Happiness is followed by sorrow and sorrow again by happiness. Therefore you must try to become established in your true Nature. When this is achieved you will find supreme peace."

Then the Senior District Magistrate, Manindra Babu arrived. When he was introduced, it was mentioned that he was unmarried and was practising yoga. Ma asked him :

"Baba, so you have not tied a garland round your neck and are practising yoga ? *Hathayoga* or *Rajayoga* or some other yoga ?"

Manindra Babu : Not *hathayoga*; I practise *rajayoga*. Previously I could be at it for long hours and liked it a lot; but now, due to laziness, I cannot do very much.

Mataji : Laziness is certainly an obstacle, an enemy. Well, has this yoga that you pratise become natural to you ?

Manindra Babu : I do not understand it. Often it seems to have become natural to me, yet at other times I doubt whether this is so.

Mataji : Have you learnt this yoga from a Guru ?

Manindra Babu : In the eyes of the world, I have no Guru, but I know full well that I have a Guru.

Mataji (laughing loudly) : Without asking questions, information cannot be elicited.

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August 23rd, 1939

I had heard that Sri Ma was arriving at Dhaka by the Calcutta Mail today and departing for Kheora.

There was a large crowd at the station by the time Mataji arrived. She sat down smilingly under a flowering Gul Mohur tree at the end of a platform.

Ma was saying :

"The road is long, time is short, keep on walking wihout idleness. You are enjoying the pension earned by your worldly labours, now try to earn a pension also in the spiritual world. Otherwise you will have to return again and again. If you try hard, you can obtain a pension in this very life or at least reduce the chances of having to return many more times. But if you do not work you will be obliged to take another return ticket. Already you have taken so many return tickets, oh so many :

Manmohan Babu : We know how to earn a pension in our worldly life. Please tell us how to do so in our spiritual life.

Mataji : If you practise faithfully what you have learnt from your Guru, your pension will be provided.

An old man : I wanted to stay with you but you would not let me do so !

Mataji : Could you have stayed merely because I asked you ? You would then have started worrying about your son, your daughter and the grandchildren (Everybody laughs). It is better for you to stay at home and do your work there. Suppose your children wanted to leave home and pursue a religious life, would you not have pointed out to them that if they practised their religion by forsaking you, they would not attain their spiritual goal. Similarly they can also retort that since you have brought them into the world, you should not forsake them now. (Everybody laughs).

The old man : So then tell me please what I should do now !

Mataji : Stay in your house within closed doors. This will be as good as not staying at home. But your children will be satisfied to see you in the premises.

The old man : Is it possible to live within closed doors in a household ?

Mataji : Can you live in a *dharmasala ?*

The old man : No, I can't.

Mataji : Can you not convert your house into a *dharmasala* ? I strongly advise all to do so !

The old man : What is the use of promising something which I know I cannot do ?

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Mataji : You mean to say you cannot convert your house into a *dharmasala* ? What else is it but a *dharmasala* ? You presume that you own the house, that your son and daughter are yours .. but when you breathe your last, everything will have to be left behind. Then, where will your house be, where your son and daughter ? This is why everybody should understand that he is living in a *dharmasala* . "Our real home is not here. My son and daughter don't belong to me, nor do I belong to them." How do you feel about thinking on these lines ?

The old man : When thinking in this fashion one cannot live a family life.

Mataji : Why don't you relax your hold, stand apart as an onlooker and see whether your household still functions or not. He who really owns your house and family, He will arrange for everything. Once you can place your trust wholeheartedly in Him, He is sure to run your household very smoothly.

Furthermore, you have not been born with the sole object of living a family life. See what a state you have reached by doing so ! Your black hair has turned white, your teeth have fallen. How long will you continue to misunderstand your role in the comedy of life for the Real ?

Listen, it is no good remaining in abject poverty all your life. As it is we live in constant want. No sooner do we satisfy one want, than a new one crops up. Having built one house you then hanker after another, or you wish to replace your old car by a new one. In this manner you spend one life after another in the attempt of fulfilling your worldly desires. It is good to call a halt to this incessant craving. This is why I say, it is no good to remain permanently in poverty, in other words to let constant wanting be your second nature. It is much better to strive towards redeeming your *prana*.

The old man : By *'prana'* do you mean the act of inhaling and exhaling ?

Mataji : Yes, we talked about this subject only the other day. As the *prana* , He resides within each creature. He is the Life of all lives *(praner prana)*, the Supreme Life *(mahaprana)*. Ever remain in His presence. At all times repeat His name with every breath. You will realize everything in this way. Creation, preservation, destruction; all the paths of spiritual enquiry, of action, of devotion are all contained in this process. The sense perceptions, such as sight, taste, smell, etc: the individual, the world, the One with attributes and devoid of attributes, are all embraced in this process.

The world is manifested as the *prana* (life force) in waves. This is *Prakriti* (Nature). One must rise beyond this Nature. Just as still water can be reached by pursuing flowing waves, so Supreme Life *(mahaprana)* can also be realized by performing *sadhana* with every breath *(praner sadhana)*. This kind of *sadhana* can

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be practised in all states. God Himself is present as the breath. Nothing can be achieved without breath control. What I said about sitting in one's house with the doors shut means just this. To withdraw the senses from their objects of enjoyment means to close the doors. Otherwise, what would be the use of sitting in one's room within closed doors ? (Smiling) You should partake of several different preparations when taking your meal; then only can your intake be increased.

Pramatha Babu : Ma, please make sure that this is done by us !

Mataji : What does partaking of different preparations mean ? *Japa,* meditation, reading scriptures or religious books one after another, so that you can devote more and more time to this. Should you be unable to perform japa beyond a certain length of time, turn to reading spiritual books or listen to talks on spiritual subjects or do kirtan. This is what is meant by partaking of several food preparations.

The old man : This seems to be very difficult.

Mataji : Do you want to set to work or do you just want to eat and drink and sit idle ? Can you afford to behave in this manner ? How is it possible to earn your pension if you do not work at all ?

Pramatha Babu : Why does not the Mother prepare food and feed the children ?

Mataji : When will She do so ? When they really pray to Her to prepare food for them. Rely on her entirely like an infant and you will see that She will make all necessary arrangements .

When grown-up children request their mother : "Ma, please cook our meals and feed us !" The mother may then turn round and say : "Why should I ? Can't you cook for yourself ? Or else get married so that your wife may cook for you !" (Everybody laughs loudly).

As the time of departure of the train was nearing, Sri Ma stopped talking and Bhupati Mitra took the opportunity of asking Her something concerning the Dhaka Ashram. I heard Ma reply :

"I have nothing to say on this. You should all get together and decide whatever is best for you. If the Ashram belonged to me, perhaps I might lay down certain rules and regulations. But there is nothing that can be called my own. I did not even decide on the site where the ashram should be built. It is true that I used to come to this place from time to time even before the ashram was built. Therefore, Jyotish (Bhaiji) thought it was my *Kheyal* to establish an ashram here. Actually those who had in the past performed their spiritual practices in that place used to take me there. That is why I say that I have nothing to say on the subject of ashrams. Carry out whatever you think best. Those who gave the inspiration for building the ashram are looking after it, and will continue to do so".

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29th August, 1939

Sri Sri Ma's new Ashram at her birthplace in the village Kheora was ceremonially inaugurated today.

From there Sri Ma visited Sultanpur, Comilla, Chittagong, Vidyakut, etc. and eventually came to Dhaka for a day only, on Sept. 13th, 1939. On hearing this, I at once went to the Ashram. There, a brief conversation concerning Sobha Ma's meeting with Ma at Comilla ensued.

I asked Ma, "To have a genuine desire and to stimulate a desire is surely not the same thing. I at first misunderstood what you were saying. I noticed another thing : whenever you asked Shobha Ma a question on any essential point, she would reply without any hesitation so that one could not help being impressed or amazed.

Mataji : When a thing is being discussed, it is better not to refer to any particular person and whatever I say now should also not be construed to refer to any particular person. You should specially keep this in mind !

You were talking about answers to questions on essential truths; do you know how this takes place ? Even in the material world you may have noticed that when someone acquires special proficiency in any particular subject, he can talk at length on other similar subjects. If he is thoroughly acquainted with a certain aspect of some branch of knowledge, he can talk on other branches also in a balanced way. The same applies to the knowledge of essential truths.

Knowledge *(jnana)* may supervene in three different ways. One possibility is to acquire knowledge by the study of scriptures. Another way is to have certain inner experiences during their studies. As one progresses and has more and more experiences, one's understanding of the scriptures starts undergoing all kinds of changes. These changes can be of endless variety.

There is yet another kind of knowledge which is not based on the study of scriptures and the like. This is Self-revealed. Just as the juice of ripe fruit flows of itself so this knowledge reveals itself. These three types of knowledge cause different kinds of *bhava* and different behaviour. By observing the attitude of mind and the conduct of persons who have acquired knowledge, it can be understood whether their knowledge is based on the scriptures or on their own inner experience.

The same applies to *samadhi*. People frequently say, "so and so goes into *samadhi*". So I should like to ask what are the characteristics of *samadhi* ? Only by watching the symptoms of the body one cannot decide on the type of samadhi. Someone may have closed his fists and it may be impossible to open them even by force. In another case perhaps one hand is lying crosswise on the other. In a third

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case, may be, the feet are crossed, or else both hands and feet are static in a crossed position. But just by noticing all this one cannot say whether it is a *samadhi*.

I : Ma you made us understand at Navadwip that if someone by the force of some *bhava* closes his fists in the intensity of feeling and loses outer consciousness, then this is not a case of *samadhi* . If one tries to hold on to any bhava by force this may happen. Here desire and passion are still present, so it cannot be termed as *samadhi* .

Mataji : Yes, but do not belittle such a state. It is no mean achievement to curb all worldly thoughts and concentrate only on a single type of *bhava* for some length of time, one can slowly proceed towards fulfilment. You must have observed food being cooked in steam. This process is somewhat similar. If one notices that while boiling something in steam, the steam is not being dispersed away, then one understands that the food will be boiled on its own, and the more it is boiled the more will its colour change. Likewise, if by forsaking all other thoughts, someone remains absorbed in one particular type of *bhava* then he is gradually transformed both within and without. By remaining in such a state for some length of time, he will eventually attain perfection *(siddhi)*.

I : Does one retain any knowledge of the outer world when in a state of *samadhi* ? Once, when explaining to us the state of *samadhi* you had said that, supposing you were conversing normally and felt the urge to answer a call of nature; then suddenly a state of *samadhi* supervened and you lost consciousness of this. Three or four hours may have passed in such a state. Later, when you returned to your normal state you again felt the call of nature with the same intensity as before the *samadhi*, not more, not less. But during those three or four hours that had elapsed in *samadhi*, did you retain any knowledge of the outer world ?

Mataji : You have referred to the urge of nature's calls. During *samadhi* bodily urges are kept in abeyance. Everything is thrown up and one merges into Oneness. Later after having gradually become completely still, the previous state may again be resumed. This may be repeated several times. You may perhaps have noticed that I went to the toilet. Suddenly *bhava* intervened and all outer things were forgotten. Later, when the ecstasy became subdued, I may have relieved myself, but again on return to the *bhava*, outer things were stopped.

I : Ma, you have described what was happening inside your body. What I should like to know is this : Suppose you are lying in a state of *samadhi* and we start crying in fear because your *samadhi* does not seem to end. Would you in your state of *samadhi* be aware that we were weeping ?

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Mataji : In that state there is no question of duality. All is merged into ONE. Everything is contained in the One—the fragments and the whole exist simultaneously just like water and its waves.

I : Ma you said that knowledge can come about in three ways : through a study of scriptures, through a combination of study and inner experience, and through direct vision. Can somebody who has not acquired any of these types of knowledge, take part in discussions on the essence of things ! Suppose he remembers his former birth, can he give instruction on spiritual truth ?

Mataji : The remembrance of previous births can be of many kinds. There is infinity in everything. Somebody may be able to tell about his father, mother, country, and so on of his previous birth. He may relate several incidents which can be proved to have actually happened. Others may have retained the knowledge acquired in a previous birth. Suppose someone has by spiritual practices attained to a certain realm *(loka)* and become closely connected with its Gods and Goddesses; he may then be reborn retaining the knowledge of all this, and be able to converse on vital matters of truth in accordance with it. How can one explain the different kinds of states that may be attained ! Everything is of infinite variety.

At this stage there was an interruption to Mataji's talk as many ladies had come to perform their *pranama*. The small room could not accommodate all the people, so Ma went to the Kirtan Hall. There I again asked :

"Ma, some people believe you to be totally perfect. Yet they cannot understand why you do not always answer their questions to their satisfaction. Why is this so ?

Mataji : (laughing) Look, you say, whosoever is completely perfect, why should he not be able to answer all questions at all times ? Actually if somebody is perfect in all respects, he is able to divulge all truths, whatever anyone present. Then again he may also adapt himself what he says to the grasping capacity of the people present. There are various aspects to this problem. But for this body there is no problem : whatever has to happen, is happening. This body has no particular *bhava*. At times certain things may be voiced by this body, but it is not at all concerned whether it satisfies people or not. At other times this body does not like to speak in any way that would hurt someone's feelings. Whatever is meant to happen does happen through this body. Where is the confusion in this ?

I : Everything is confusing. (Everybody bursts into loud laughter).

Mataji : If someone believes that I at times do not reply because I am unable to do so, why should I mind it ? I have no objection to anything you may say about me.

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I : Well, Ma, what is the harm in there being a bit of ignorance together with perfection ? Do not knowledge and ignorance together make up wholeness ?

Mataji : Of course, there may also be a bit of ignorance within perfection, but do you know in what way ? This slight ignorance is completely under the control of the Perfect One, whereas the ordinary human being is subjected to ignorance. One who is perfect is not subservient to anybody or anything.

A number of similar subjects were then discussed. In the evening many visitors came to the Ashram. Manindra Babu, the Deputy Magistrate, asked some questions on the present state of the country. He said : "Ma, when will the oppression and injustice that can be observed in our country, end ? The nation seems to be heading towards destruction. What is the means to save it ? I do not want to say anything about myself, but what can be done to save the country or the nation ?"

Mataji : This is just the present way of this country. Such is the world--*duniya*, based on duality. There is bound to exist side by side joy and sorrow, truth and falsehood, war, dissention. At times there is peace, then again upheaval : like the waves which continuously rise and fall.

You have said, you do not seek anything for yourself, but this is not quite correct. You have identified yourself with the country so that its problems have become your own. Thus whatever you say about the country is also what you say about yourself. If you can merge yourself in something still bigger, such as the whole world, you will come to realize that these wars and dissentions are all part of the Almighty's *lila*. Sorrow and disaster come into being and are again driven away. It is He who is awakening in you the intense desire to change the state of affairs. Because He now wants things to change. He has aroused these feelings in you and in many others. If you look upon everything in this detached manner nothing will upset you anymore.

Mataji continued to converse in this way until late at night.

[To continue]

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AFTER THE FIRST MEETING

—A European devotee

Meeting Sri Ma in Madras resulted in some inner disturbances, but after a few months I was keen to meet her again. I learned that she was to be in Poona by mid-June (1972). This was a journey of not more than about 24 hours by bus and metre-guage train.

When I reached Sri Ma's ashram in Poona, I found no sign of activity and was told she would arrive in a couple of days. I found a low cost student room, as this was near the university and explore the area. There was a small temple to the Divine Mother on the hillside above the ashram - inside was an orange painted rock, which was the image, and I noted that garlands were available there for devotees.

Waiting finally came to an end and at last Sri Ma arrived along with a group of cars. The assembled devotees could have her darshan for a short while and this was the situation for the whole 5 days I was there with her, as she was not keeping well. But she did walk up and down the verandah of her cottage, and I found myself gazing at her for hours, as one could not take one's eyes off her white clothed figure; it was so fascinating. Two incidents stick in my mind.

I had purchased a garland from the vendors at the Mother's temple, and bargained the price right down to a level I felt was reasonable. But when I tried to present it to Ma somehow I was not able to do so and I felt she would not accept it - the reason I came to understand was that I had "contaminated" it by reducing the price to the undoubtedly poor vendor. Thereafter I always paid the asking price of anything purchased for an offering. Sri Ma, pervading everywhere, was after all present in the whole process of offering including the purchase. Any "violence" in the scheme of things made the offering unworthy. At least that was the message I received.

When I came to return to Sri Ramanasramam I took leave of Sri Ma and she gave me the sweetest imaginable smile. As I did my pranams I felt within she was offering me her hand, if I wanted it, for help in my sadhana. Instantly something from within accepted the offer and it was as if we shook hands, "it was a deal".

On my return to Arunachala I told a friend about Sri Ma's continued stay in Poona, and he left very soon to see her also. He came back after a couple of weeks and told me of his stay and how Sri Ma, at his request, had permitted him to meditate before her for 15 minutes. Somehow that stuck in my mind, and I wanted

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to return to Poona. I heard that she had suddenly left Poona on 5th August, giving the cars following her the slip, and could not be traced anywhere. No one, but no one knew where she was. It turned out she had gone to stay for a couple of days in the hall of a Siva temple in Sion, Bombay. It was looked after by old devotees of Sri Ma but all but one of them were in Poona. Swami Paramananda was with Ma but was told to stay indoors in case he was recognised. After two and a half days her presence was made known and she moved to the garden of B.K. Shah, where she usually stayed when in Bombay. After 4 days she returned to Poona. This unexpected long presence in Poona was totally at odds with her original program to go to Calcutta, Varanasi and Kankhal but it meant she was still there when I returned around 15th August.

On my arrival I was relieved to see the clothes lines with the drying white clothes, tiny white socks and yellow towels, which meant Sri Ma was there. This time the visit took on a different flavour, knowing Ma would be there for a couple more weeks and since her health was back to normal there was a full program every day. It was as if it was Christmas day every day. Upon my arrival I sat down with the devotees in the hall of the ashram and Ma was sitting on a bench in the corner, a yellow towel over her head. After about 20 minutes I became aware that my mind, which had been buffeted by the usual experience of traveling long distances by train in India, had become quite quiet and peaceful. It had happened by itself, unawares as it were.

A number of occasions stick in my mind after the 30 years that have passed since that visit to Poona. One day Ma visited the house of a devotee. A number of devotees accompanied Ma in cars. After we arrived an old man started reciting slokas, and his devotion was palpable. Looking at Ma, who was listening to him intently I noticed she no longer looked to be a woman of around 80, she looked to be so youthful, a girl of perhaps 25 - 30 years. As I gazed at her my mind tried to analyse what it was that made her appear so young. I failed but the fact remained.

Another time Dilip Kumar Roy, the well-known disciple of Sri Aurobindo, and singer, visited the ashram with Indira, the mother of his ashram. He was elderly and moved slowly and when he sang his voice was soft with his age. But as he sang his singing became stronger and stronger and he was sitting then upright and straight. It was almost a different person sitting there at the end of the recital.

During my visit Raksha Bandhan was celebrated. On this occasion a sister ties a coloured "rakhi" on the wrist of her brother as a protection. So too the Guru ties it on the wrists of disciples. The rakhi is a little coloured symbol with a variety of designs. I was watching Ma doing this and when she came to a German devotee of

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many years, she happened to tie the Hindu aryan symbol like the Nazi Swastika (but the other way round). The devotee had been closely involved with the Nazi party during the world war, this was no coincidence, though I thought Ma would not have known of the use by Hitler of this symbol so similar to the Aryan one. One could see how this struck the devotee. That night there was 30 minutes of silent meditation to commemorate Sri Ma's self diksha, and Ma's touch would be felt by all.

Eight days after Raksha Bandhan was Krishna's birthday. It was the custom to celebrate this by having a dance by "cow herders" who would carry pots of curds on their shoulder. Ma joined in the dance and did a turn round with all the lady devotees. Then she threw curds into each person's mouth as prasad. When I saw her roll her sleeves up and put her hand in the pot it reminded me immediately of my physical mother. Of course the curds went not only in one's mouth but on one's face!

After my arrival I had requested one of Ma's girls if it would be possible to meditate with her (as had happened with my friend). I heard nothing for several days and on one day I had left the ashram to have some lunch nearby, when suddenly someone rushed up to say I was being called in response to my request. When I reached Ma's cottage I found to my dismay that Ma was on the chowki on the verandah surrounded by a group of people. Rather embarrassed I sat in front of her in the middle of them. After may be 15 minutes someone placed a piece of fruit in my hands as a hint that time was up. However not wishing to lose this opportunity I did not follow the lead as any Indian would surely have recognised it to be. I was waiting for some indication from within and it did not come. There was a ripple of laughter from those present. Finally someone whispered in my ear that a Maharaja had come to see Ma and Ma should attend to him. I immediately got up. To cap it Ma indicated I could take lunch at the ashram, but I declined as I already had lunch. To refuse prasad was another gaff, coming from Ma as this invitation did - which more time in India would have shown me.

By the end of a couple of weeks I was feeling ill and had decided it was time to go. I went to Ma's room to take leave and did my pranam. As I turned to go out of her room I found the door was closed. This took me by surprise and I did not know what to do. I was neither here nor there. Just at that moment Ma started speaking things to me, which when translated, turned out to be advice for sadhana. My immediate thought was "I cannot possibly do that". This was followed by another calming thought- "of course you can, if Ma asks you to".

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I took a rickshaw to the station and got onto the train. I was just finding my reserved seat when I found to my dismay that my wallet had vanished from my pocket. I quickly got off the train-no money, no ticket. Luckily I had kept Rs. 4 or so in my shirt top pocket and it was enought to get a rickshaw back to the ashram. I was able to borrow some money from a German friend and my stay was thus extended until Ma left.

From that time I found myself always being drawn to visit Ma again, which was not so difficult as I was living in India. However I found that often if it was not the right time my body would feel disturbed if I pursued the plan and it returned to normal if I dropped it. Thus I could not go when I wanted. After some more months in this condition of wanting to go and not being able, at the point where I felt I badly needed to consult Ma on some important things, I felt that I could leave at last.

So I started off in mid December 1972 for Varanasi (since I had heard that Ma was there) without a train reservation. Berths had to be booked in advance and there was no time for this. The first night was sitting crammed in a passenger compartment until I reached a mid-way station where I could get a berth in an express train bound for Calcutta.

Reaching Howrah station I visited Dakshineshwar and saw Sri Ramakrishna's room and the temple of Mother Kali, as well as the other places of his sadhana. A pigeon blessed me with its offering as I had darshan of the deities—I hoped it was a good omen. Taking the night train I arrived at Varanasi and went immediately to Ma's ashram in Bhadaini. The office told me of a dharmasala where I could stay and having found a room and had a bath I went to register at the hotel desk. I was shocked to be told I could not stay anywhere as I did not have my passport with me. Being the time of Mrs. Gandhi's "Emergency" there were new rules which I had not fallen foul of before, and previously I never carried my passport. I went back to the ashram and told them what had happened. Ma had just come out to give darshan and I could see them telling her my plight. After a journey of 3 days and nights things were not looking too good. Had I to go right back? Someone at the ashram suggested a visit to the police station and they in turn passed me on to the tourist officer - who was not available until next day. But where could I go now? I took a rickshaw back towards the station, quite at a loss, when someone ran out calling "cheap hotel, cheap hotel". My reply was: "No passport" but that did not seem to be a problem and I found myself in a room with a cow-dung coated floor and a single string cot all for Rs. 7. As soon as I settled in I was told I had to move out as the room had in fact been specially prepared for a bridal couple. At this time

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desperation had set in and I refused to move. I bolted the door. I did not dare go out in case I lost the room, and so my idea to visit the ashram again had to be dropped.

The next day after being passed from one person to another, I was told by the police, I could stay but only in Ma's ashram. I knew that foreigners were not normally allowed to stay but I had no option but to ask. The answer was as I expected. I was completely at the end of my tether by then and the attitude "Ma - you must help" faded away and was replaced by "Now what shall I do?" Just at that very instant someone came running from Ma - who was walking in the next courtyard—to say that I could stay in a small cottage built for Ma but currently unoccupied, about 25 minutes walk from the ashram. So with great relief I moved my luggage there. That evening I could visit the ashram again and Ma was giving darshan in the Gopal Mandir. In the middle of the darshan the lights all went out. I had in my bag a candle and matches I had purchased for the cottage as it had no light. I brought them out. The candle was lit before Ma and darshan carried on. After may be 15 minutes the lights came on and someone snuffed out the candle-which made me sorry as I watched it smoke. Just then Ma indicated that they should light it again and it was done.

After darshan I returned to the cottage and slept on the floor in my sleeping bag. It was obvious that ants were enjoying the wooden door and window frames, which had been part eaten away.

The next day I went to the ashram in the happy expectation of seeing Ma again. At the very moment when she came out someone called me to say I had to return to unlock the cottage as it had to be sprayed by a pest-control company. All my bags had to be moved to a watchman's room and I missed darshan altogether. Returning later after the spraying I found the whole place awash with DDT spray, dead and dying lizards and creatures were everywhere. The place was cleaned out, the dead creatures removed but it was not a healthy environment in which to sleep, so I had no choice but to put my sleeping bag on the verandah, though December in North India is not warm.

Because of the police restrictions I was having my food at the canteen of Sri Ma's hospital next to the ashram. After a stay of 5 days Ma was to leave for Kanpur but I could not follow as I had to wait for my passport to be posted up from Sri Ramanasramam. The Christmas holiday was coming up and I was hoping it would arrive before. On Ma's last day before departing I was sitting near the Annapurna temple of the ashram when I happened to look at a picture of Sri Ma on the wall. It was as if there was a ray of light (though it was not light) coming from it. I looked at another picture and it was the same, as if it was alive with energy.

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On the morning of her departure Ma was strolling round the ashram with a small group of devotees following. One of them was an American woman and I was able to hear part of her conversation with Ma, which was translated into English. She had asked a question about her sadhana and Ma asked what her practice was. She answered, "Transcendental Meditation". Ma repeated the words with her Bengali accent-she clearly had no idea what it was. Then she said some things that I do not recollect. The lady replied with a puzzled look that she did not understand what Ma had said and Ma's reply was "How can you fail to understand? This is God (she pointed at a temple roof), that is God (she pointed at a wall), that is God (she pointed at the ground), everything is God". Immediately the doubts of the lady were removed and she seemed very happy with the reply.

Sri Ma left and I had to remain another 5 days on my own over Christmas before the passport finally came. I was in fact just beginning to feel at home there, enjoying the atmosphere of the Ganga, when I was free to leave. But by then I had had enough and decided to take the train back to Tiruvannamalai, instead of following Ma.

Shortly after I arrived at Varanasi I had asked Chitra if I could have a private talk with Ma but at the time she was very busy. Finally Chitra said I could have my talk, but by that time I had lost the inclination. But the answer to my question did come and so clearly and plainly-no words could have conveyed it so well. An incident took place during this waiting period that somehow I knew instantly illustrated the answer to my question. It was as if Ma in the form of the "world display" was giving me the answer I had traveled 3 days for.

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THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

— P. C. Mehta

[Continued from before]

The characteristics of individuals :

Individuals are described by the Buddha, as having three characteristics :

i) *'Dukkha'* i.e. suffering,

ii) *'Anatta'* (*Anātmatā'* in Sanskrit) i. e. absence of any eternal self.

iii) *'Aniccā'*, (*'Anityatā'* in Sanskrit) i.e. impermanence

The doctrine of *'Anātmatā'* or *'Nairātmya-vāda'* or 'no-self and self as 'Sangatha' or aggregate:

Ordinarily, we assume that the self is an integral something which is other than the bodily organism and survives bodily death. Buddha admitted the transient sensations and thoughts but denied any permanent self underneath. The sensations and thoughts together with the physical frame were an aggregate or *'sanghata'*. According to canonical Buddhism, there is no self other than what is made up of the five impermanent *'Skandhas'* which are, a) *'Nāma'* (having four phases) and b) *'Rupa'*.

'Nama' is made up of four different phases of the mind. *'Citta'* is recognized as rudimentary and the other features of mind are explained as *'citta'* or derived from it. They are i) *'vijnāna'* meaning 'self-consciousness', ii) *'vedanā'* meaning 'feeling', iii) *'samjna'* meaning 'perception' and iv) *'sanskāra'* meaning 'mental dispositions', while *'Rupa'* is the complex of the physical body, thus making the psycho-physical organism of 'mind and body'. This is our self which obviously is ephemeral impermanent and without substance. In *Nibbāna'*. it completely ceases to be. This ceasing to be is extinction. Therefore in *'Nibbāna'* there is total extinction.

'Avidyā', *'Avijjā'* or ignorance according to Buddhism is the failure to recognize the hollowness of the self. According to Advaita it is in not knowing the true nature of the Self which is the identity of *'Atman'* with *'Brahman'*. The origin of evil is in not knowing the true nature of the Self and therefore the cause of suffering is in *'Avidya'*.

'Atmani sati parā-samjna sva-parā-vihāgat parigraha-dvesau,
Anayoh sampratibaddhah sarve bhāvah prajāyante'.

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'It is clinging to this false self, as a result of our ignorance of its real nature, that explains all the misery of life as it is commonly lived'.

This principle that everything was *'Samghata'* i.e. 'an aggregate' of their respective components, was extended to cover all things. The principles of impermanence and no-self are fundamental to the teaching of the Buddha. This doctrine starts by postulating basic physical and psychic elements and the whole creation as produced out of them. But the rudimentary elements are as unsubstantial and evanescent as the finished products. The finished products are all aggregates of simple elements and do not stand for new things. Early Buddhism recognized four 'bhutas' or elements of material things viz., earth, water, fire and air. These names stand for the sense-data associated with them. The material world, our indriyas or senses and our bodies are all aggregates derived from these elements and are termed 'bhautika'. On the psychical side, it recognized 'citta' as rudimentary and explained the other features of mind as 'citta' or derived from it.

This is known as *'Nairātmaya'* or 'The doctrine of non-substantiality' of things, or the doctrine of *'Anatta'* (*'Anātmata'* in Sanskrit) i.e. absence of any eternal self. The Hinayanists believed in the impermanence of all things. For Mahayanist view see para 41. For Upanisadic view of Reality see paras 52-54 of chapter 1 and for the Jaina view see para 7 of the chapter on Jainism.

This doctrine is called *'Nairātmya-vāda'* or 'no-self', from a negative point of view. It is also the doctrine of *'Samghata'* from the positive point of view. It covers both soul and matter.

Doctrine of *'Anityata'* or *'Ksana-bhanga-vāda'* or the doctrine of momentariness :

The full development of this doctrine which is common to both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism belongs to later times. It is discussed further in para 51.

Th doctrine of *'Aniccā'* or *'Anityatā'* or *'Anityatva'* mentioned in para 26 means the doctrine of impermanence of self as well as things.

This doctrine is pushed further to arrive at what is known as *'Ksana-bhanga-vāda'* also called *'ksanika-bada'*. It is the doctrine which avers that nothing that is, lasts for longer than one instant. In Jainism, the minimum duration of empirical objects is two instants- (see para 27 of the chapter on Jainism). For the Nyaya-Vaisesika view see para 15 of the chapter on Nyaya-Vaisesika. While the Hinayanists believed in the impermanence of all things, the Mahayanists added that they were also non-essential, of an indefinable character and void at the bottom. (See para 35 for Mahayanist view).

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Considered from the element of time, this aggregate does not continue the same even for two moments. As such the self and the material world are in a flux *'samtana'*. The symbol of a self-producing and self-consuming flame is commonly given. Thus everything is a succession of similar things. This theory is a compromise between the two views of 'being' and 'non-being, current at the time. It is 'becoming'. When a thing is not changing into something else, it is not constant but is reproducing itself and is therefore to be regarded as a series of like forms succeeding one another perpetually. The reality is dynamic, consisting of incessant change, with nothing that changes. It amounts to action but no agent.

If everything is only a series of similar states, what is the relation between two consecutive similar states ? In Buddha's time one explanation given was that it was an accident and another view recognized the causal relation between them but assigned it to God. Buddha rejected both views. He held the view that uniformity in nature ruled out the possibility of chance in the orderly succession of states. He disassociated himself from all religions which dogmatically held any external agency or God responsible for creating causal relation in the orderly succession of states. He held the view which is known as *'Paticca-* ('pratitya' in Sanskrit)-*samutpada'* or 'dependent-origination' and postulated necessity arising in correlation with some external factors as the role governing element as discussed in para 3. One example commonly given is that an oil lamp does not start until the wick, oil, etc. are there, but once it starts, it goes on till one or more of the co-operating factors are withdrawn. Thus though the causal law is universal, its operation is dependent upon conditions.

Two criticisms of *'ksanika-vāda'* or 'the doctrine of momentariness' are: i) if everything is a flux and continually renewed, how is recognition possible ? Buddhists answer that things are only similar and we mistake them as same. Thus similarity is mistaken for identity. ii) If the self is changing every moment, how does one account for memory ? Buddhists answer is that every successive phase has within it all the potentialities of its predecessors' which manifest when conditions are favorable. Hence, though a man is not the same in any two moments, yet he is not quite different.Professor Hopkins says, 'The self is not only a collective, but also a recollective entity'. It is on this basis that Buddhism establishes moral responsibility. The 'Jataka' stories all end with the identification of characters, though separated by births. Thus Buddhism denies unity in the sense of identity of material, but recognizes continuity in its place.

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Ignorance : (See also; Avijja' para4)

The doctrine of the cause of suffering as ignorance along with the eleven steps leading to it was later applied to all thing (see para 3). This means that ignorance was regarded as the cause of our perception of multifarious things.

If all things are transient and unsubstantial, our desire for them is a delusion, which we must shed. More powerful than this desire is the craving for the preservation of the self or the will to be. Since there is no self, we should get rid of this craving and thereby extinguish the pains of existence. Thus self-denial is to be understood in a literal sense in Buddhistic ethics.

Buddha's purpose :

Buddha's purpose was to bring about release of man. He was not concerned with metaphysical questions which did not bring about the emancipation of man. 'philosophy purifies none, he said, 'peace alone does'. Some say that he did not believe in God; some say that he did not concern himself about the topic. He wanted man to work out his own salvation through diligence. Though there is no metaphysical aim in what he taught, there is a metaphysical view underneath it, which we have tried to explore.

Comments on 'Theravāda Buddhism':

This theravada doctine called the doctrine of the Elders which is the surviving form of the so-called *'Hinayana'* or lesser vehicle, represents the later stage of the basic original teaching of the Buddha, which we have dealt with in section VII. 7 under the title of 'The primitive stage'.

i) It is pessimistic. But it is not a creed of despair, because it admits of the possibility of attaining peace here and now.

ii) Since all is suffering, the foremost aim of man is to escape from it.

iii) Therefore *'Nibbāna'* is more concerned about looking to the negative side of extinguishing this suffering than the positive side of what that perfected state is.

iv) It is positivistic that is excludes whatever was not positively known.

v) It is pragmatic. Buddha taught only what was necessary for overcoming evil. Its aim is direct and immediate realization and not conceptual comprehension. It therefore avoids being theoretical.

vi) Though there is no metaphysical aim in what he taught, there is a metaphysical view underneath it.

vii) It completely repudiates Vedic tradition especially as regards rituals.

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viii) Early Buddhism is dualistic and realistic. It recognizes a distinction between a soul or self and the material environment in which it finds itself. However it is very different from Hinduism in its ideas of self or soul and matter.

ix) In it, there is no belief in God, nor even in a Divine Absolute.

x) Buddha is not regarded as God and therefore temple worship is only the paying of respect to the memory of a departed teacher.

xi) Buddha's doctrine is less austere than Jainism. It avoids the two extremes of mortification and indulgence. This is the meaning of 'Buddha's Middle Path' in its physical sense. (See para 46 for Middle-Path principle).

[To continue]

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JAI MA

— Dhiraj Sapru

jai ma
....and presiding was a poetic flight, one fine spring night.....
to behold - in the passing is she ...

Oh ! this twinkling sky - with many - a - eye
in sapphire gleam - this silver streak
to behold - in the passing is she ...

smiling down on younder youth
dawns to mind those - days - withstood
to behold - in the passing is she ...

waxing high - then - sometimes low
as though a brilliant magic show
to behold - in the passing is she ...

heaving tides - the ocean roars
yet glistening pathways - easing soars
to behold - in the passing is she ...

so near - yet afar - floating loose
cut free from bonding warp 'n' woof
to behold - in the passing is she ...

bashfully - coy as day - light - breaks
gallant again - when twilight makes
to behold - in the passing is she ...

queen 'n' crowned - on Her night
potent - awesome - in splendid might
to behold - in the passing is she ...

jai ma

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THE DIVINE MOTHER

—Dr. Premlata Srivastav

[Continued from before]

Life Introduction

(b) Childhood

Ma was a witty and a pretty child, ever smiling. Unlike other children, however, she was neither naughty nor fickle-minded. During that age, Ma's leela began, albeit in a low-key manner.

When she was two and a half years old, Ma went to Her maternal Grandma's place. There, Didi Ma took her to a kirtan recital. Kirtans had an effect on Ma's body and soul. Time and again, Didi Ma would notice that the child was losing Her control. Then she could not realise that it was ecstasy which overcame the child.

Even during meal time, Ma's lack of concentration was noticeable. But Her indifferent behaviour at that time was not explainable.

Ma was greatly fascinated by devotional songs and music. The residents of Kheora village used to go round, doing kirtans, during new year eve, and other special occasions.

During her childhood in Kheora once a storm flew a part of the thatched roof of Bipin Behari's house. The storm was dangerous enough to scare everybody but Ma continued to laugh till the next evening when, pointing to the hole, she said to her mother. "Now we can see stars without going into the open. Now, inside and outside have become one and the same."

Ma had an easy independent gait. It is heard from Didi Ma that in childhood Ma would often look at the far off sky without battling Her eyelids. At times, she would loudly sing and dance with divine grace, jump and laugh and talk to plants and trees. Sometimes she would be lost in Herself; in a playful mood. This sweet little girl would visit the neighbours singing and dancing. Often suddenly, in sharp contrast she will withdraw and turn serious. In what type of rapture she was submerged only she knew.

That even as a child she had no fear was exemplified when one day Ma and other girls, who were her mates, suddenly saw the herd of cows. While others ran

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away instantly, Ma easily befriended the cattles and walked alongside until herdsmen rushed in to move them away.

Ma's devotion for the supreme authority was also evident when at Her maternal grandma's place she worshipped small earthen images given to Her as toys.

When *Ma* was about five, Bipin Behari called Her to do 'Hari Kirtan'.

Ma asked him,	"Baba, who is Hari"
Father said,	"Hari, is the name of God"
Ma:	"What happens when you sing the name of Hari ?"
Father:	"Hari Naam Kirtan will bring Him closer."
Ma:	"Is Hari too big ?"
Father said,	"Yes, He is very big"
Ma:	"Is He big as the field we see ?"

To her child-like innocent queries, Bipin Behari said, "Yes daughter, He is bigger than the field. Call Him, then only you can see how big is He ?

Narrating this episode, Ma said, this is how she was initiated to Hari naam Kirtan by her devoted father.

Ma's respect for elders and heed for their advice was beyond doubt. Once, an aunt took Her to a fair. At a nearby temple, she asked Ma to wait until she returned. The aunt went to the fair and forgot about it. Only after two three hours did she remember and came back in a hurry. She was astonished to see Ma seating in the same place, as she had asked her to.

Once *Ma* went to her Badima's (aunt) place, near their house for getting 'Mattha' which was used to be churned from milk on a daily basis. When she was very small, she would go to the aunt's home, holding an utensil close to her chest. Ostensibly, she went there to collect butter and Mattha. One day, when she went there, the aunt cried out, "I have only started just now and you are already here"!

The aunt suddenly noticed the utensil, being used for the process, had a hole through which all the curd was draining out. She was astonished by this development. She gave *Ma* whatever was left in the pan. After this incident, Badima would call Ma to give her share even if she was late.

Her childhood games were unique.

With the ankle of one foot as centre in a heap of sand, she would draw a circle around it with the big toe of the same foot while keeping the other foot suspended in air. Then she would dance by rotating Herself in similar fashion. Didi Ma used to be scared of Her dance in this manner. Ma's other mates were not able to repeat her feat.

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She used to play with her mates, but she could always detach herself from the rest. Here she was fully involved, as part of the playing group. Then she was all alone, detached like sand is brushed away from one's body. Her mates knew Ma was honest, would always speak the truth. That's way, whenever they wanted to do something secretly, Ma wouldn't be taken into confidence. So whenever people wanted to know the fact, they would ask Ma rather than any of her mates. Ma would not speak lie even by gestures. 'That—Truth is the first step of divine attainment' is Ma's teaching.

Ma's way of wearing saree was so good that village women used to cite Her way as a perfect example.

Ma used to be cynosure among the children who never felt satisfied in playing without Her presence.

The tale of Ma's childhood can not be complete without the mention of Her youngest maternal uncle Sharda Charan Vidyasagar (Sona Mama). A very pious and virtuous man, Sona mama was an acknowledged master of the Vedas. He had a special affinity for the young Ma. Later, Ma has recollected many incidents involving Sona mama.

When she was about 7 year old, Ma visited her Grandma's place during Durgapuja. Amidst festivities, people noticed a change in Her mood. She had turned ecstatic and mumbling something to Herself. Having watched Her in trance, Sona mama later quipped :

"What were you muttering ?"

Ma had no answer to Sona mama's, apparently frivolous question.

Sona mama was a saintly person. During the Pujas, he used to worship Ma as Kumari (Virgin Goddess) before performing Durga puja. Likewise some others also used to treat Her as the Virgin Goddess during some puja or the other.

When she was a child, Ma would often be found lost in Her world of dreams during the religious celebrations. When she regained her normal composure, she would feel shy of Her entrancements.

Ma's childhood friend and cousin, Sushila Masi, who lost her husband at a very young age, was initiated by Bholanathji and thereafter lived in our Ashram.

One of Thakurma's (Bipin Behari's mother) friends was Chikkan Didi who liked *Ma* very much. She would often take *Ma* to her house and ask her to cook meals. Chikkan Didi called Her preparations as Ambrosia. Ma had a friend who at 30, was twenty years older than she was. One day, she asked Ma about the nuances of evening prayers. Smilingly and playfully, the ten-year-old Ma demonstrated the entire ritual before her.

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"The body responded on its own" *Ma* said to Didima later.

Although she never failed in what the elders instructed Her to do, she used to be always a bit detached, often lost in Her own world in the midst of friends and relatives. Such actions invited comments. Some used to consider it as Her innocence, others termed it as dullness and lack of concentration.

Didima always considered Ma simple and straight. One day, Ma went to the pond filled the brass pitcher (given to her by Sonamama) with water, pulled it upto Her belly to see Her curved shadow in the pond water. Then she cried aloud to Didima:" You always call me straight, see me now."

(c) Ma's Education

Ma went to school only for a few months in Kheora and Sultanpur (Grandma's Village) put together. She was irregular because she couldn't go to school on Her own. Secondly, Her brothers and sisters were prone to diseases due to which she had to attend to them.

Ma went to Kheora's primary school for sometime. There whatever she studied she learnt quickly. Incidentally, the teacher would ask Her only what she knew well. To the teacher, Ma was a bright girl.

In later years though *Ma* could write in Bengali but whenever someone requested Her to write something *Ma* would simply put a dot and say this dot encompasses everything. (Bindu mey Sindhu). On Baba Bholanath's request in 1930 *Ma* wrote in Bengali. English translation of this writing is given at the end of this chapter.

(d) Marriage

On 7th February 1909 *Ma* got married to Ramani Mohan Chakravarty who later become known as Bholanath, also as Pitaji (Father) by the devotees.

About her marriage she has said "The sentiments with which you marry, no vibrations of that sentiment ever existed in this body".

Ma's role as a bride was excellent. In absence of Her mother-in-law who had passed away, Pramada Devi, wife of Bholanathji's elder brother Revati Mohan, was incharge of the household affairs. She was a hard task mistress. *Ma* did all household chores - from fetching water, cleaning the house, to cooking - with utmost sincerity under Pramoda Devi's supervision. As was the custom for a newly wedded bride, *Ma* used to keep a part of Her saree over Her face as veil. Nevertheless, she looked very attractive in the bridal composure. On many a occasion, ladies of Her age in the neighbourhood, would share Her work in many different ways.

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Sometime, while cooking Ma would be in a trance, not knowing the food being cooked on the stove is charred. These incidents at times invited comments from those who never could understand Her deep religious introspections. However, never did she retaliate against such comments. Thus, duty, and service to mankind are foremost to be cultivated in a sadhak is *Ma's* teaching. Years later, when *Ma* was in Calcutta, the sister-in-law Pramoda Devi visited Her. She was surprised by the crowd of Her followers there. During the festivities, one night when most of the people had returned home, *Ma* herself went to old Pramoda devi and talked to her for a long time about the old days in their East Bengal dialect. Those present there, were enhanced by Ma's excellent sense of humor and memory. Pramoda Devi said, "You won't believe the way she did Her household chores. She never left any scope for me to complain."

Ma has said "no duty can be fulfilled without putting one's heart into it. Service or duty strengthens one's zeal for good work."

Ma has mentioned that "this body has lived with father, mother, husband and all. This body has served the husband so you may call it a wife. It has done all sorts of cooking and also all menial works and scrubbing etc so you can call it a servant. But looking from another stand point this body has served none but God. All served are different manifestations of the Almighty God and this body served them as such. When I prepared food it was done as a ritual for food cooked was after all meant for God. All Service is service to Divine. Serve all as God and for the sake of God."

After the death of Revati Mohan in 1914 Ma went to Ashtagram with Bholanath. Ma's life with Bholanath started from here. The wife of Jaishanker Sen, at whose residence they stayed used to call her 'Mother of Joy'.

In Ma's words—"At the time of marriage this body's mother (Ma used to refer her like this) has asked to respect and obey her husband. Hence she loved and respected Bholanath like she esteemed Her father."

"This body had a relationship with Bholanath which can be likened to the closeness between a father and his daughter".

To Bholanath Ma was a mystery from the very beginning. She saw in him a little child Gopal (Name of Lord Krishna as a child) and inspired in him as his mother.

Ma broke into laughter recalling that Bholanath initially passed Her trance and body effects as childishness. He would emphatically say 'It will be all right when you grow up."

Ma said, "seems I never grew up."

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Bholanath had no inkling of his unusual marriage. He thought he married an ordinary village girl. But Ma-instead of leading an ordinary conjugal life, managed Bholanath's stride into the spiritual world with extraordinary care, determination and devotion acting as a friend, philosopher and guide. Even while engaged in domestic duties she would often lose control over Her limbs. Thus the mysterious house wife was a mixture of opposites. Household duties were usually performed by Her to perfection. But she was unpredicatable, often prompted by kheyala.

He often wondered is she a Goddess in human form ? It is beyond all comprehension that they had a unique relationship poised on a spiritual plane.

(e) The Sacred Task of Service

From the early days Ma was pained by people in distress. She always extended her helping hand to people in need. Hence she was welcomed to every house of Kheora village.

Beside the general upkeep of the house *Ma* used to make pickles, spin the wheel to make clothes. In 1974 during Ma's birth-anniversary celebrations at Agarpara Ashram Calcutta one lady presented Her with a piece of cloth which *Ma* had spun years ago and given to this lady. *Ma's* expertise at embroidery work was excellent, some of Her work reportedly are kept at Her ashram at Kashi.

Sri Ma has said "Unknowingly, Her respect for Bholanath extended to giving even water and towel for wash whenever he returned home. Ma's mother said to her, 'husband is her guru. "That's why her body devoted herself to the service of Bholanath."

Bholanath used to be amused by her obedience and devotion.

When spiritual practices started, duties towards Bholanath were never neglected. Ma would sit for meditation on the floor of the bedroom at night only after finishing the household work. Even that work was done completely engrossed in Her own world with a feeling of reverence to God. The single most aim in all Her work was to do everything in the name of God.

Ma's neatness and competence in upkeep of the house, preparing for evening prayers, cooking meals, and treating guests was discernible from very early days.

She cooked delicious food and Bholanath enjoyed treating his guests with the delicacies. Once *Ma* came to know the guest who would be dining at their place had a distaste for preparations of radish. Invariably, the guest was treated with excellent food prepared by Ma. He was astounded however when told that all the dishes including sweet dish had radish as the base substance.

One day a Gujarati Sadhu visited Ma's place. She received him reverentially, wiped the seat with the corner of Her saree before offering the seat. She devotedly

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treated the Sadhu with an assortment of food. The whole arrangement reflecting an honest and dedicated service deeply impressed the Sadhu.

He said, "Today, I had meals at the hands of the 'Mother of the Universe. I never had such an experience."

Ma's spiritual life was noticed from Her Ashtagram days. Ma had maintained a 'Tulsi Manch' at the house she lived. The Tulsi altar was so well kept with *Ma* regularly worshipping the place that people, the neighbours, too reverently came there and prayed.The famous kirtan group of Shri Gagan Roy too came for a recital at their place. During the kirtan *Ma* went into a trance.

The earliest revelations, as per the records, of *Ma's* bhava samadhi was kirtan sometimes sung by neighbours and strangers. Ma becoming totally unaware of the surroundings, fully absorbed in something undescribable and would loose body consciousness. In the beginning she tried to keep it a secret but slowly took Bholanath into confidence. Here for the first time she went into a trance in public. Bholanath tried his best to bring Her back to this world but failed. *Ma* remained in that condition for nearly 19 hours.. During this stretch ants had gathered around Her eyes as she looked absolutely lifeless.

Referring to trance later Ma said "As sweat oozes from human body streams of Joy and Happiness (Anandam) emerged through this body, with a feeling of strange communion with the hymns."

Ma said "Hari Kirtan' which her father used to do as part of his Sadhana and she as a child became his regular companion was now extended to Naam kirtan at Ashtagram when she lived there."

It was in Astagram where not only Hara Kumar Roy called Her 'Ma' but Kshetra Mohan, a friend of Bholanath prayed by falling at Her feet calling Her Durga, Durga.

Some people would take Ma's trances as evidence of mental disease, while some others took it as effect of evil spirit. So for cure Bholanath took Her to many saints and exorcists but without success. Finally Bholanath invited his friend, a physician Dr. Mahesh Nandi to examine her. Dr. Nandi stayed at their place and after thoroughly watching Her for few days opined, "it is not the illness or any disease but Her exalted stage on the path of spirituality. You should not show her to everybody.

[To continue]

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WITH MOTHER IN THE KUMBH MELA
[FIVE]

— **Shraddha Davenport**

As the years have passed, those words of Mother stand strong and solid like a beacon piercing the fog of this Maya, pointing out the only safe way on this Journey home to Her holy feet. Sometimes when life seems over whelming I recall that She said, "I can play with you any way I like" Then I smile and think, "Yes, and so She plays"

Rameshji gave us one more treasure that day. On January nineteenth, during the main bath, he had taken water from the rivers confluence. Mother had put her finger into that water which he had collected and he presented a small bottle of it to us. I still have a little of that precious gift.

That afternoon Satya and some of the boys went to visit a great sadhu whose camp was about a five-mile walk from Mother's camp and was situated on the other side of the Ganges. That sadhu's name was Brahmachari Yogiraj Deoraha Baba. He was a naga Baba who always stayed in a hut built upon stilts about eight feet above the ground. He was reputed to be any where from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty years old.

Satya took his movie camera and photographed that beautiful saint. His smiling countenance was framed by heavily matted locks. There were no V.I.P. 's at his camp. Any one who came to see him stood in the sand looking up to where he sat. A short cloth covered the railing surrounding a narrow porch outside his hut. As he squatted behind the cloth, he was constantly propelling fruit through the air to the awaiting hands of the devotees below. Like Mother, his aim was perfect and the fruit would sometimes come from his hand so rapidly that it appeared to have come from a catapult. All of this I saw only later in the movies which Satya took I did not want to take the chance of missing Mother's darshan and so I had stayed behind at Her camp that day.

At 4:30 p.m. I found Krishnapriya in Mother's pandal. I also went there and sat near where the girls were singing kirtan. Mother had not come out yet and by 5:30 p.m. the whole front of the camp was filled with people waiting to see Her. For crowd control, Swami Swarupanandaji had closed off the regular entrance into Mother's pandal and constructed a narrow passage-way with heavy bamboo rails on each side. It ran from the front of the pandal inward almost to Mother's porch.

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Pilgrims seeking darshan could pronam there, then the passageway turned and led back out to the camp exit road. The rest of the pandal was kept for Mother's devotees.

When it was announced that Mother would not come out until 7:00 p.m. the crowd got angry and noisy because they had waited such a long time. So Mother came onto Her porch at 6:15 p.m. There were people everywhere. I was close to the front but on the side Swami Swarupananda sat on Mother's porch between Mother and me I kept leaning over to see Her. Finally, Mother leaned way over, around Swamiji, and smiling She looked at me for a long moment. It seemed that She was saying, "Are you happy now?" Smiling as I pronamed, my inner reply was, "Yes, Mother, I am happy."

When the crowd started rushing, Mother went in side and the curtains around Her porch were closed. Krishnapriya told me to wait and she went onto the porch. A lot of the people left. Mother then came back to the porch. Swami Swarupananda had the idea of opening Mother's curtain only on the left side and quickly moving the people down the passage-way pronaming to Mother as they moved by. When the crowd threatened to rush, he would close Mother's curtain and they would settle down. That plan worked well and the crowd was getting smaller.

When the curtain was closed, I knew that soon She would again be revealed, just like Banki-Bihariji in Vrindavan. Then I moved up to the right and peeked in at Mother over Krishnapriya's shoulder. Soon Swami Swarupananda noticed me and said "No peeking". I stuck my lower lip out and asked, "What if I cry?" He, with mock sternness replied, "Not even if you cry "I laughingly lamented," Oh Swamiji, you have a hard heart!" He smiled as I touched his feet. The men close to where I was were all laughing, and told me peeking was not allowed.

Then the curtain was opened and Mother smiled at me. She looked at me often. Once She turned Her sweet gaze toward me for a long time, smiling all the while. Chitra was near by me and I said to her, "Thank you for all that you did today." She replied that it was not her, and said, "You do not thank your own." I told her, "I cannot help it. I love you. Thank you !" She gave me a sweet loving smile and I knew that she understood how my heart was overflowing from the events of that glorious day.

Like a spoiled child I had cried for the Mother of my heart, and like the perfect love which She is, She gave Herself to me who had no merit.

January twenty-fourth was a special day. It was the last bath day during Mother's stay on mela grounds and our eighteenth anniversary. Saraswati Puja was to be performed in the large pandal after the bath that day.

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We awoke at 4:00 a.m. and within forty-five minutes had joined Mother's party for trek to the rivers' confluence. The walk started from the camp across the road. Each group had its assigned place in the procession. We all walked behind Mother Who sat upon the same graceful silver throne which had carried Her into the mela grounds seventeen days before. Above Her was the large white umbrella with shimmering silver lace around its edge. The silver fluttered in the breeze, catching any light amid the darkness, reflecting it and dancing joyfully around Mother's head.

As we slowly moved across the sand, a pale pink dawn began to reveal the identities of devotees who had appeared as only shadows before. The quiet was suddenly rent by the wild sound of the mighty Naga Babas. They almost collided with our group as they rushed by in a double-file line clad only in ashes.

At the river the crowds were so intense that I just stood to the side hoping I would not be knocked down. Each group in the procession was allowed only a few minutes to bathe then to move on so that the next ones could have their turn. I held our little bag clothes and Gopalji's basket. Chitra asked me to hold her basket too. I thought that I would go to the river when Satya came back but I did not know about the time limit. Satya had gone into the river with Mother and took movies of Her and all the devotees surrounding Her in the water. He gave Gopal a bath and dipped some shell garlands, which I had purchased, into the water. They were for friends in America.

When he returned, soaking wet, to where I stood, he handed me his camera bag, our wet Gopalji, and the dripping shell garlands. Dye from the pink tassels of the garlands played "Holi" on everything they touched. I believe that I sunk a few inches into the sands as I juggled so many things and put Gopalji safely into his basket. There was no chance for me to take the blessed flower offerings to the river, much less for me to go into the water. Satya took the flowers, offered them for me and collected a small bottle of water from the river. As Mother's group left, we were the last ones out, for Satya had to quickly change from his wet clothes.

I did not mind being unable to bathe in the river that day, for my only salvation lay in Her. She was the sole reason for my being there. If She would not grant me liberation, then I would never have it.

Slowly the pink dawn turned to a warm coral and illuminated the festive colors that surrounded us. The road, which we walked, was cordoned off on both sides by heavy wooden railing. As we caught up with Mother's carriage I could hear

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people who were standing behind the railing joyfully calling out. "Jai Ma! "Jai Ma!- happy to catch a glimpse of Her as She passed. Mother smiled and greeted all with folded palms.

Satya took movies as Bal Krishna Gupta danced before Mother with arms held high. Dr Shelat's face was beaming with joy, reflecting the mood of everyone who was blessed to be there that marvelous day.

I managed to walk just ahead of Mother for a while and She graced me with several loving smiles. When we returned to Mother's camp, Chitra asked me to take a polaroid photo of Mother before She got down from Her carriage. Then Mother went into Her house and we went to change clothes.

Chitra told us that Saraswati Puja would be at 9:30 a.m. in the large pandal. We started to go there early, but Mother called for us and said to bring our cameras. Dressed in white silk with Her coral shawl and wooden puja chapals (slippers), She walked down the camp road to a more private area behind a barrier. We eagerly followed Her and both took pictures as first She stood, then when a chair was prepared for Her, took her seat. Most people were told to stay in front of the barrier but a small group had already lined the side of the road behind it. Mother motioned for us to come near Her. We took each other's photos kneeling by Her chair, then as I sat at Her feet She gently closed Her eyes and everyone fell silent. She sat that way, in a sublime bhav, as time stood still.

Looking at Her divinely beautiful face I wished that I were able to *really see* that which I beheld. Then Her nostrils slightly flared and She subtly shifted Her body. With eyes cast down She slowly opened them as I bowed at Her feet. What happened during those moments was known only to Her, but as She arose from Her chair I stood to follow Her and became aware that I was completely intoxicated.

Krishnapriya and I held hands as we moved behind Mother, insuring that She was not crowded as She made Her way through the many devotees and into the large pandal. The rare privilege of being allowed to do any small service for Her is a great boon.

Inside the large pandal a shrine had been erected. It held a graceful, life-sized image of Goddess Saraswati. Brahmachari Nirvananandaji was making all the preparations for Her puja. When Mother entered the pandal, She was escorted into

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a small room next to the altar. There She was worshipped as She held the symbols of the Goddess. Afterward She came to an asana which had been prepared for Her next to the altar. The puja was beautifully done and we all admired the lovely Saraswati image. Afterwards everyone stood as Mother left the pandal and went to Her house. Slowly the crowd dispersed and we went to our hut for lunch.

This would be our last full day on the mela grounds. We would then follow Mother to Modinagar for the last few days of our trip. Most of our western friends were scheduled to leave for Varanasi late that afternoon. Mother would be going there right after Modinagar. We were very honored when Swami Keshavanandaji came to us. He was not sure if he would be going to Modinagar. Krishnapriya, Gadadhar, Ram. Shuddhananda, and Jayananda each came to say good-bye. We were very sad to part from them as we had all shared a very special time together and now it was ending.

In the evening I went to Mother's pandal hoping to have Her darshan. There was a great crowd pressing in around Her house and pandal. The curtain that hung around Her porch was completely closed so I was unable to see Her. I returned to our hut and got most of our things packed for the next day's travel. That was our last night at the grand Kumbha Mela, our last night on the sandy banks of sacred Triveni of Prayaga, and our last night in the little grass hut next door to Mother.

The morning sky was cloudy and the air was cold. We went to see Mother and found Her in the big pandal near Saraswati image. The image would be taken to river for immersion that day. Mother sat with Saraswati Devi for some time, then we followed Her when she went to Her pandal. It had started to rain. We pronamed to Mother and with Chitra's help asked Mother to bless us. We asked Her permission to go that night to Delhi, then to join Her in Modinagar on January twentyseventh. Mother nodded Her head and said" Accha. "Chitra brought an orange and an apple for each of us. Mother touched them, then She went inside Her house with Chitra.

The rain seemed to be dissolving the last vestiges of the mela. The roof of our straw hut had developed new leaks and there were no plastic bags left for patching it. We kept our luggage in the only dry spots and with a sweet sadness stood within those straw walls for the last time, reluctant to bid good-bye to our lovely hut.

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When our taxi arrived we put all of our things in the trunk and asked the driver to wait.

Mother's pandal top was leaking and only a few people were there. We saw Bal Krishna Gupta and enlisted his aid in translating our words to Nandi Kumar who had been such a good chowkidar. We had a few gifts for him and wanted to be sure that he understood how much we appreciated him and his selfless devotion to service.

This was our last chance to see Chitra, as she was going to Varanasi from the mela. We called for her to come out and said that we must go. She shook hands with Satya, then held my hand and affectionately touched my face and shoulder. Lovingly she looked at me and said, "Please come to Varanasi for two days." Then she was gone. I felt sad, knowing that there was no way we would be able to do as she had asked.

Our taxi carried us into Allahabad where we collected the rest of our things. After a hot bath and delicious meal we rested until train time. At the station it took about an hour to finally get the coupe which we had reserved before the mela, but at last it was made available and we settled in for the night.

[To continue]

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SRI ANANDAMAYI MA —THE ONE ALONE

— Sri S.K. Bose

There is only one way to achieve happiness in this terrestrial ball that is either to have a clear conscience or none at all. The world in fact reflects our inner thoughts and feelings from inside and thereby experiences different phenomena and realities from outside. On the contrary Anandamayi ma had neither naught nor aught, neither death nor immortality. Her body simply existed, breathed silently, self contained, absorbed in the world of her own. As far as immanent, temporal aspects are concerned she underwent through physical changes but in the transcendent eternal aspect, forever complete and unchanging. This is probably the reason why she was not perturbed by jealousy, dejection and grief nor by miseries born by passion. She was in the world yet not of the world, a state of complete detachment. No vision of ours could grasp her but her grasp is over all visions. She was above all every thing yet accessible to us in spite of herself, being omnipresent with all the events appearing and disappearing in this world. She had the power to catch away a man from his stillness and plunge him deep into the ecstasy of timeless omnipresent being. Just as a lamp lights hundred of other lamp yet remain lit, so was Anandamayi ma. She often used to say "To be a human being means to place first and foremost the desire to know your self". You make God your closest friend and do this by installing him in the alter of your heart. You cry out for him with desperate eagerness. He will be with you at that instant. "Apply all your energy you possess and He himself will do the rest". Even a desperate yearning will open the passage to establish a direct contact with the supreme power.

On seeing her for the first time Sri Ram Baba exclaimed Anandmayi ma is a burning fire personifed. She is in coherent association with the Universe a part limited in time and space created by a non-physical cosmic force. Even at this level of consciousness, to her, each human being was important. While responding to questions dealing with mundane sequences or social problems her responses were short full of solemnity and meant for the total person. Her language used to reflect the basic theme of philosophy combined with the most modern concept of cosmogony and structural coherency. Even Mahamahopadhaya Gopinath Kaviraj

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had with full modesty and wisdom in his command admitted about powerlessness of his intellect to fathom the phenomenon that was intrinsically paradoxical and resistant to rational deduction. Best thing for us would be to try to love her, bring our self into closer union with her true self. "As a result of this process she will surely reveal herself to us more fully according to our degree of fitness and receptivity what Gopinathji said. This clearly indicates that we had been dealing with Anandamayi ma a super spiritual genius of very rare variety.

Richard Lannoy being a photo journalist specialized in magazine reportage recorded her fast changing facial expressions. His basic objective probably was to register spontaneous changes in Her facial expression and to do this Lannoy could focus the camera for a long time on Anandamayi ma's face specially on her forehead. Ceaseless mobile lines of extremely delicate in appearance were recorded crossed by countless vertical lines converging at the centre of her forehead. This resembles with the architectural design of two unequal summits of the samadhi temple placed one behind the other as if suggesting silently the place and the spot where the body be rested permanently.

Incidentally the author likes to recall utterings of Anandamayi ma. **"No doubt innumerable number of births follow out of only one seed, but pointing to herself, there are exception".** For instance an old seed instead of undergoing through the process of germination becomes a fertilizer after combining with the soil and thus provide each plant the substance necessary for its growth. This probably implies that her formless presence will remain as a source to provide inspiration to every aspirant according to their need while practicing sadhana. Beside this her flickering eyes followed by tilting her head was the reaction due to receptivity of both audible and inaudible sound signals produced all the time at distant horizon.

Lannoy had an unique opportunity to watch Anandamayi ma at Vindhyachal closely from outside, sitting in silence with few others in a room . The atmosphere was divine lasting indefinitely without any break. The analogy he used for the scene is **"Mataji was conducting a symphony of quietness not by commands or even by a unifying beat but a kind of focused persuasion suggestion, inspiration".** Each person present would be persuing his own inner tune. After few minutes she tilted her head in a variety of ways together with a

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shift in her gaze, a little adjustment of her sitting postures similar to birds quality, ruffling its feather before it settles to roost.

Although Atmanand to some extent managed to convey the language of her quietness and transparency of words but was unable to explain her musical tone accurately. She had marvellous command upon word making to project with excellence an image of a deity. The precision and tensile strength of Sanskrit were well suited to Anandamayi ma in order to give an appropriate reply to questions when asked by both common and highly educated persons. She used to emphasize **"One who loves God is but to destroy identification with the body.** When this has come about there is destruction *(nasava-na-sva)* . In a similar way she used the word *samundra, sva-mudra* (ocean) to characterize the supreme being as if he is expressing himself. Similarly *taranga, tar-anga,* limbs of his own body. These simple and catchy examples give immense impact and pleasure to the person and helps for the advancement towards 'Truth'. Her repeated submission to every body is those who are pilgrims on the path of super consciousness must develop inner strength, energy, mobility and swiftness. **It will not do to sit down and ride in a rickety jolting bullock cart.** At all times, the mind must be intensely vigorous, energetic and alert then only you can forge ahead with great speed.

Collin Turnbull a renowned anthropologist passed some time with Mataji and expressed "She had filled exactly that emptiness I had felt in the western world and through her I learned how to lead a whole life, how to carry the spirit into every day world, how to lead a every day life that is at the same time a dedicated life, and intensely spiritual". She had the simplicity of rose yet had all the complexity of a rose. Her "nothing special quality" did not conceal her distinction of manner to express movements in a crowd. The English poet Lewis Thompson who had a discerning eye for people of very high quality said "She is a realized being completely without ego". Douglas Harding who met Anandamayima told "She was totally detached from what was going on and paradoxically totally united with it. Her teachings were totally uncompromising when it came to the essence of things, very tough, but absolutely gentle and generous with people's effort. For instance an eminent speaker happened to be the head of Shankaracharya Math, was lecturing on Vedanta at Almora. He was using Sanskrit terminology in somewhat hectoring

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tone. Playing with a flower garland, very casually, Mataji injected a word only addressing to Swamiji as 'Pitaji' in a soft and lightest tone. Swamiji stopped in mid sentence, looked down and suddenly burst into tears. The jaint monk just crumbled astonishingly before everybody . The atmosphere however was normalized by Mataji, asking one ashram girl to sing devotional song which was accompanied by all those present. This immediately relaxed, Swamiji, regained his composure and was soon rattling on. No body except Mataji could tell what actually touched him at that moment. This gives an idea about Mataji's interaction at right moment in appropriate words. This is an indicative how in one hand she was firm like thunder and extremely soft like flowers.

This remembers me her words **"When you feel power within yourself, when new light dawns on you from within, the more you can keep concealed in utter calm and stillness, more it will grow in intensity".** "This probably applies to Swamiji". Mataji does not often give orders but when she does command obidance without asking for reasons is the only way, together with the tasks she sets, Mataji transmits the power to carry it out as well.

At later age when she no longer had the physical strength to answer to people, she had but one order *"Bhagavan ke niye thako"*. Early in 1982 aged 86, she made the strenuous journey from Vrindaban to Agartala, to Calcutta and back. She was in poor health when visited by His Holiness Sri Shankaracharya of Sringeri in the month of July. He earnestly begged Mataji to get well soon. She replied **"Baba, this body has no illness at all". What is happening is due to the pull of the 'Unmanifest'. All that you have noticed is due to that".**

Some days later Indiraji with Rajiv, Soniaji and her grand children paid a short visit. For the last time she sat for a few minutes. On the 27th August attendant girls heard her whispering *"Narayan Hari"* several times. That evening she suddenly opened her eyes and gazed upwards.Within few minutes she took her last breath.

* * *

'I am what I was and what I shall be, I am whatever you conceive, think or say'.

●

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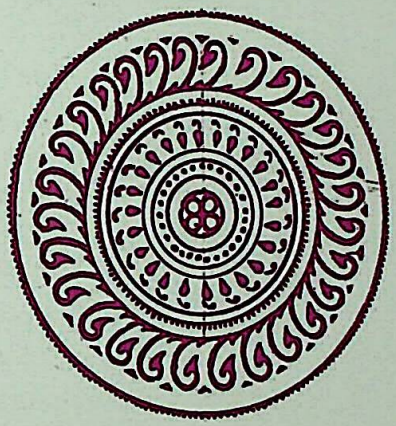
MA ANANDAMAYEE

AMRIT VARTA



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MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

VOL.-9 October, 2005 No. 4

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The journal mainly publishes articles relating to Sri Ma. Other informative articles on religious literature and Saints and Teachers of any country or religion will also be welcome.

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"Hari-Kathā hi Kathā aur sab vrithā Vyathā "

[To talk of God alone is worthwhile; all else is in vain and leads to pain]

—Ma Anandamayee

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Jai Ma

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MATRI VANI

The intense desire for God-realization is itself the way to it.

* * * * *

When you leave everything to Him who is the Fountain of Peace, then only is there hope of peace.

* * * * *

Be anchored in fearlessness. What is worldly life but fear ! When you live in the stronghold of fear, must you not be afraid ? It is futile to expect fearlessness there.

That you may be delivered from all sorrow you should endeavour to seek refuge in God alone.

* * * * *

This is the time to mould yourself. You will have to resort to renunciation and fortitude. So as to be released from the evil propensities acquired in previous lives which lead to pain and suffering, try to make your mind the consecrated shrine of the All-Good *(Sadbhāva)* and desirelessness. The first thing is to feel drawn towards God.

Be unfailing in service. Whatever has to be done for anyone, do it in a spirit of service.

There is yet another matter to which special attention must be paid: sloth has to be abandoned altogether. Where it is a question of good work *(Satkarma)*, disinclination and lethargy have to be completely ruled out. The difficulties that may arise when doing anyone a service should be borne cheerfully.

* * * * *

Invoke Him, rely upon Him. Wherever you may be you are in His arms. If happiness is to be found in this world you have to aspire to God-realization.

What worldly life is, you have seen: day in and day out one is immersed in an ocean of misery. This is what is called *Samsāra* (Life in the world).

* * * * *

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Through the stream of Godly thoughts lies the path that leads to the destruction of *Karma*. So long as the goal has not been reached, one is bound to reap the consequences of right action, wrong action and inaction according to *Karma*, the law of cause and effect.

* * * * *

Losing hope is losing all indeed. But has this loss of everything occurred ? Is not the heart bubbling over with desires and hopes ? This is only natural - it is the innate tendency of the individual.

Perfect resignation gives deeper joy than anything else. Accept it as your sole refuge. Whatever God does at any time is wholly benign. If you can bear this in mind you will be at peace.

* * * * *

The more time is devoted to the thought of God the greater the gain. Where worldly life is, there is want: this is its very nature. If- with or without inclination - you can keep your mind consecrated to His Feet, there is promise of peace.

* * * * *

To expect peace from worldly life is in vain. Try to live exclusively in His presence and do all service from a sense of duty. The world is certainly not an abode of happiness. The sole hope of peace is to take refuge at the Feet of God.

* * * * *

Keep your thought on Divine things (*Hari Katha*). To surrender mind and heart and body to Him who is their Lord gives peace; but to expect peace from the world will of a certainty bring sorrow in its wake. Try to live a life of holiness and asceticism, that is, abide in a state of Godliness and virtue. Why dissipate mind and body by useless worry ? What He does - whatsoever - is all for the best. Why, by harbouring only longings and desires invite sorrow ? In whatever circumstances you may be placed, reflect thus:" It is all right, it was necessary for me; this is His way of drawing me close to His Feet"; and try to remain content.

By Him alone should your heart be possessed.

●

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THE REAL OBJECTIVE OF HUMAN LIFE

—Sri Virajanandaji Maharaj

The objective of human life is to realise the 'Self'. This can be regarded as the theme of knowledge for any aspirant of this path. The objective here being the 'Self' yet ever unknown that a riddle which can never be solved by the self. Guidance from somewhere becomes an absolute need. Here comes the role of a Guru, i.e. only a guidance of Guru can lead to know the 'Self'.

The riddle is obvious, a 'Self' is ever known to the self, all the same, it remains ever in the darkness. In short, The guidance of a Guru is absolutely sought for to solve this riddle. What is 'sadhana'? It is nothing but to act in obedience to the guidance of the Guru to the letter. In our institution, one has been most lucky to be carried to the feet of a personality who is not only a guide but the objective itself, something unique combination not usually heard of. With a small note above we should therefore have a firm determination to follow Her words without question and there should not be any deviation or hesitation or question to doubt such guidance, i.e. as unflinching obedience to which we shall move ahead.

However, a human mind in the world is always unsettled in its query to settle down. In this helpless situation, it can never remain steady on any solution ever remaining in the darkness in absence of that it can hide for the time being without realising the Guru's guidance is the only way for such solution, he is ever on a move to seek one or the other way. Evidently a movement in the darkness the light remaining far far away ever.

Without realising the importance of Guru's guidance, the only way to lead to the objective, a human mind is to qualify his guidance under a mundane light of intelligence. That is to say, an interpretation of the guidance in his intellectual under -standing. This sort of understanding remains ever a movement in the whirlpool. The problem remaining ever unsolved, i.e. we create problem after problem in following our intellectual understanding failing to realise Guru's guidance.

Here is a small episode narrating such helpless pursuit ultimately leading to worldly confusion and never to lead to any solution. Lord Buddha's brother and sewak 'Anand' prayed to the Lord to accept Buddha's foster mother "Parajita" with ascetic order. Buddha tried to make 'Anand' understand, "This was not a right pleading to accept a woman with the association of man in sadhana. All the same, conceded to your pleading knowing fully well the course of events will one day

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speak for itself that the life of Buddhism by this act of surrender will be reduced by 500 years' and it did happen so. With this small deliberation as above, should we still insist on moving against the principle as laid by 'Ma' for an ascetic, i.e. a sadhu or a Brahmachari should not insist on any act or suggestion which will go straight across against Ma's firm directives. Once we give indulgence to such liberty, i.e. to liberalise the Guru's words to suit our own way, it will clearly open a downfall path. By stages, as we shall continue to move like that, one fine morning we will find that we have lost all our values and we have been far away to redeem the same. So, if the above picture is truly realised should we not make a determined effort to follow Ma's words as ever and ever and never to make any foolish attempt to make our mundane suggestion to dilute the above ideology and distract ourselves to a destination ever remaining far far away from the destination desired.

We have tried to impress that sadhana is nothing but to follow Guru's words. However, sadhana as such what it is. Ma says sadhana means to regain *sva-dhan* i.e. self wealth. The very word we gain clearly points out that we have lost our wealth already. Here the word self wealth signifies 'Self' the only wealth means the permanent asset i.e. on reality. Does it mean our reality can ever be lost? It is not really but drawn under a cover which has got to be removed. The cover means action of diverse *gunas* to which a *Jiva* has been made a slave to regain his mastery. A *Jiva* has got to conquer over the forces of his *gunas*. This conquest implies various actions and behaviours in life to have a command over these negative forces. These actions are various in their method and application in every behaviour, thinking, moving, eating etc. in our daily actions and thinking. That is to say our way of life has got to be disciplined in every phase of activity, thinking, eating, moving etc.

In the land where these things are obeyed and practised since very very long past as an atmosphere of its own which is conducive to imbibe such qualities by living in the same land itself. So it is called a *Yoga Bhumi*. The reverse is called a *Bhoga Bhumi* where all sorts of mundane enjoyment freely is the way of life. (So it is called a *Bhoga Bhumi*). In this *Bhoga Bhumi* one has become a slave to propensities, i.e. 'eat, drink and be merry only'. Here the importance of *samyam* is hardly understood. A *bhoga*, i.e. physical enjoyment with no restraint whatsoever gradually makes one to loose the power of developing a spiritual understanding at all. He is now in a state of to be a slave only of mundane enjoyment and ultimately leads to a frustrated life without any mooring. The objective of life is never under -stood and lost as ever. Therefore, one lost totally under the forces of *bhoga* can

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never gain the spiritual wealth and ever remains a poor, i.e. all joy of life lost, whereas in *Yoga Bhumi* a poor is rich ever having in possesision of *Samyam* (spiritual discipline). i.e. gaining and developing his own spiritual power that only helps to gain his self wealth.

In any case, to regain the spiritual wealth, one under the clutches of mundane power can never be its master by his own effort only. Here the need of *Guru Shakti* coming to play is essential, i.e. the extrovert forces cannct be totally overcome by self will. The pattern of such a person has got to be changed creating a field of its own where his own *shakti* can be unfolded. This is what is the help of Guru that makes it possible. His self *shakti* as an active force now helps a *Jiva* to overcome these exterior forces and discover his own *shakti* (power) to move aiming at the objective, i.e. a counter force against the mundane forces. This is called an arrest of *Abhāb Gati* (i.e. a mundane movement to enjoy objects of senses without end) even in infinite births. This is only posible to arrest this *Abhāb Gati* (i.e. movement to the world of sense object).

In *Bhoga Bhumi* one is in fact a slave of propensities, all the same, be considered himself an independent personality. This illusion is only realised in course of time when one is completely a slave of *bhogas* and lost all possibilities to redeem the same. That is to say, enjoyment of senses leads to a total loss, whereas a *samyam* helps one to gain a mastery over all sense objects and ultimately his life becomes one pointed life. Ma says this is the stage where one has shaped in the form of a *sadhaka* i.e. he remains fixed with his own objective only and illusive world is completely dropped. This is the stage where *sadhana* develops to take place by itself which Ma emphasises the effort of doing of *sadhana* would lead to *sadhana* taking place by itself. The purpose of life is on the way to regain its wealth completely. This is what is called to be in the stream of *'Swabhava (Swabhāvagati).*

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THE DIVINE MOTHER

— Dr. Premlata Srivastav

[Continued from before]

Ma's *Sādhan Leelā* (1918-1924)

The history of Ma's deep religious practices can be understood only by the sayings that have emanated from Her lips on different occasions in some context or the other. I have tried to knit them together.

Bajitpur was the main centre of Her sadhana where she came with Bholanath in 1918. By and large the sole witness of this wonderful leela of Sadhana on Ma's body was Bholanath together with only few lucky ones who had the glimpses of this leela.

On being asked whether Bholanath could understood the happenings, Ma said—"How he could ? Until one reaches to that stage".

Ma's sadhana has been described as Her *Leela* because of two reasons. Firstly, this illustrated Her *'Kheyala'* and secondly, this whole drama took place on Her body in its own way automatically, effortlessly and with no intention of Her own. She used to watch in silence, she being only a passive participant, "what an unique unparallel experience' she has said.

Thus in Ma's case—it is "Realisation of the Self by the Self."

Her days during sadhana were not divided into morning, evening and nights. There was only one prolonged period of indescribable bliss.

Evidence of sadhana, its ascendance to higher planes for the realisation of the self or God have no meaning in Ma's sadhana *leela*. For Her, *Sādhak, Sādhya* and *Sadhana* are one and one only. It is unique in its own way.

In Ma's words—"It is like one reads a book already read or revisits a place once visited. This sadhana was nothing more than a 'play'. One day while bathing in a pond this body had a *'kheyal'* to play the role of a *sadhak,* and that is how it all started."

In Ma's words "this body has not followed only one particular line of sadhana but has covered all the known lines. It has passed through all the different varieties of practises referred to by the sages of ancient times. In order to attain to a particular

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stage along one of these lines of sadhana an ordinary individual may have to be born again and again, but in the case of this body it was a matter of few seconds."

During those days Ma had an unusual life style. After finishing Her daily household work with care and concern she would scrupulously clean the surrounding area, then she would go round the place with incense likening the place to a temple. Then she would sit (it used to be night by that time) in the corner of Her room for daily puja without a break. The various pujas and asanas would start automatically. Bholanath used to watch awefully lying on his bed. And what did he see in the dim light of the room ? Ma was sitting inert like a statue and suddenly Her limbs would be in brisk motion. Her body would perform various *asanas* and *mudras* in quick succession. Her complexion also changed from time to time. Quite often Her respiration assumed frightening proportions and occasionally it appeared she had fainted. A solitary spectator to all these nerve-racking transformations repeated night after night Bholanath knew not what to do ?.

Ma's image as a forceful religous personality thus began to blossom as that of a newly wed bride gradually went into oblivion.

Watching the effect of *Harinaam* on Her, one day, Bholanath asked—"why do you chant Hari-Hari" all the time ? We are *shaktas*, this is not proper, he objected.

Then what ? Ma sprang back like a child, should I then repeat "Jai Shiva Shankara Bom Bom Hara Hara" ?

Yes, this is alright, Bholanath opined. Ma explained later that she felt the same kind of happiness with the changed call for God as Hari and Har are one and the same. When I prayed with my heart and soul into it an unparalleled undescribable joy descended on this body. The initiation was yet to be done so the effect whatsoever was due to the repetition of *'Naam'* alone."

Narrating the *leela* of Her sadhana once she has said "this body has experienced so varied stages, so diverse and extreme in their nature that words fall short to explain them. In general stages do occur and last in *sadhakas*, but here it is all different. "

She further clarified- "As long as you are in different stages so long only the levels exist. After that it is just like moving in a lift. There you cease to exercise your will power. You only remain a witness of the show."

She said "As seeds are planted and pressed into the soil for saplings to come out, likewise during sadhana it is to be kept as a guarded secret otherwise many invisible and indirect hurdles come in the way."

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Elaborating on the point Ma said 'Secrecy then was absolutely necessary. There are *kriyas* of sadhana which are required to be ex rcised in private. The different forms of sadhana were not meant for this body but are meant for you all. When you relate your spiritual experiences to me, I often say that this body had those experiences and that is how it knows what they are. Not only that if anyone discloses to this body a specific line of sadhana it can describe in minute details the various stages of that very line."

During those days of sadhana different *mantras,* and seeds used to come out of their own from this body's mouth. Now I hear from you people that in ancient days *mantras* used to be automatically pronounced by Rishis. How enchanting are these *mantras,* their form and their meaning and respectively different manifestations through human bodies. Even breathing turns different with the chanting of different *mantras.*"

Further she said "Even different *asanas* and *mudras* were performed spontaneously. This body never knew about what are *asanas* and *mudras* or how they are performed ?

Sri A. K. Dutta Gupta has very well recorded Her sayings in this context.

"Sometime I would hear distinctly 'repeat this mantra', when I got the *mantra,* a querry came to my mind whose *mantra* is this ? At once the reply came. Again how does it look ? A form was revealed to me in no time."

"While sitting for yagna fingers will automatically draw the *mandal* on the floor. No formal arrangement for the puja was made, yet this body spontaneously reacted to the rituals."

Ma said "while in the fifth month of sadhana a time had come when everything around this world appeared to cry and pray to show them the way to spiritual bliss. They all prayed, even the dry wood. And not only that, even 'exercises' would take the shape of an image and will go bidding good bye to this body."

She once mentioned, "one day when the various effects of sadhana were evident she had noticed a glow around Her body. The glow was so bright that she could easily walk in pitch dark with its illumination."

"At one time this body was a frail slender frame because of the *'Kheyal'* like sages do extreme austere meditation *Krichha sadhana,* this body also went through such sadhanas to retain only the skin and bones."

During the period when Ma's body was devoted to sadhan *leela* it is learnt that even a scratch on the bark of a tree would cause pain to Her body.

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"As it happened sometime people were scared to see this body seated with eyes upturned, looking indifferent with tongue protruding out, the hands and elbows looking different from each other."

During talks with Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj some illuminating utterances welled up from Ma.

"Look in the case of a sadhaka there is aspiration towards a goal, but here there is no question of goal or aim. Every artery, vein and nerve, their functioning and vibration are clearly seen just as when somebody in a darkroom holds a lamp in his hand and throws light on every object one by one exactly like this. But for the sadhaka who is still on the path it is impossible to perceive in this manner. He has to advance, overcoming various kinds of obstacles. Baba, here there is no question of this. Here the artery is myself, the vein myself and the oboserver myself. Of course when saying 'myself' it is because some word has to be used."

Someone asked Ma, "though you were bestowed with supreme knowledge since birth the sadhana *leela* has dawned upon you. During that stage in what form did the complete fulfilment of sadhana took place ?

Ma said, "It happened in Dhaka (at present capital of Bangla Desh) but in what form it happened I am not able to describe now. Completeness or manifestation of it can be said to be the culmination of sadhana." She paused for a moment and then said—

"There is a stage in sadhana where answers to any querry would come out spontaneously. At that stage, it is possible to speak on any subject with conviction. This body had no formal education, leave alone the method of following or imitating. Baba, you have not taught this little daughter of yours to read or write. What is said therefore is spontaneous and true."

It is for you to see and understand the beginning of complete fulfilment and enlightenment."

Asked whether all these stages are mentioned in the scriptures Ma said, "How many of these can be mentioned ? Like time table only the important ones are noted. If you walk down the road you will find many more things. Scriptures give only the broad indications."

In the month of Dec', 1922 Ma all of a sudden took *mauna* (complete silence), not any normal reticence but a severe absension. She would speak to Bholanath or to somebody else when it was absolutely necessary. She would draw a circle with the index finger of Her right hand. Then *mantras* will gush out from within and she

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could now speak. Again after the talks she would pronounce *mantras*, wipe out the drawn circle and once again she would turn *mauna*. However this was not a regular feature.

(c) Meals during Sadhana

'My food is dedicated lives', Ma once said. In Ma's words, "During sadhana this body had hardly taken water from a glass in full. Years after years passed without taking breakfast or full meal. No bath, no breakfasts, no meals. Now for the sake of keeping up the routine to satisfy you people, it is taken."

Ma once explained—

"Once this body lived on three grains of rice daily for 4-5 months. Nobody can live for so long a time on such a meagre diet. It looks like a miracle. But it has been so with this body, because it can be so. The reason for this is that what we eat is not at all necessary for us. The body takes in only the quintessence of the food, the rest is thrown out".

"As a result of sadhana the body becomes so constituted that though no food is taken physically, it can imbibe from the surroundings whatever is necessary for its subsistence..... secondly one can live on air alone, in everything there are all other things. So that the properties of other things (edibles) are in the air in some measure. Therefore by taking in air alone we get the essence of other things."

"Again, it may so happen that body is not taking anything at all, yet it is being maintained unimpaired as in a state of samadhi. So as a consequence of sadhana it is quite possible to live without what we call food. In a similar way, sadhana can effect such transformations of the body that by virtue of it any part of it can discharge the function of the eye."

In 1924, when Ma came to Dhaka, she used to take three morsels of food with drinking water twice a day. Gradually, she restricted this intake to only Mondays and Thursdays. On the rest five days, she would eat just nine, three or five grains of boiled rice. However, on persistent request of Her followers, Ma has at times broken this schedule. Once during *Amavasya* Pratul—the son of Pramath Nath—dedicated *'bhog'* (a feast) to Ma at Shahbag. Ma accepted it and thus began the practice of dedicating *'bhog'* in the name of 'Ma' during *Amavasya* by Her followers.

Bholanath's nephew Amulya had just got employment during those days. He arranged special puja and *'bhog'* out of his first salary. This also became a tradition. Much later, at Kashi Ashram, Ma narrated these incidents and said, the pujas and *bhog* during *Purnima* and *Amavasya's* are continuing since those days.

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In 1924, Bholanath noticed that Ma was not able to feed Herself properly as Her hand would not lift and reach the mouth which had to be lowered in the process, creating difficulties for Ma. Bholanath himself decided to feed Her instead. Later, Didi also got this opportunity frequently.

Once Ma had a *Kheyal.* She would take only three grains of rice as meal. If there were four grains, it would automatically come out Her mouth. For some days, she would eat only as much as one could feed Her in a single breath. That would be Her quota for the next 24 hours, she won't even drink water after that.

During Her stay in Shahbag, for some days, she ate only those fruits which, upon ripening, fell from trees in the adjoining garden, which had mostly Mango and Lichi trees. Incidentally, when she resorted to this practice, it was no season for these fruits. Hence, Ma's wish to skip meals would naturally be fulfilled. She had an uncanny knack of following systems and she made others follow them too.

Thus many of Her sadhana *leelas* were such extreme changes in food habit. Sometime very little intake; total abstension, and also occasion of overeating. Once she abstained from drinking water for 13 days at a stretch, on another occasion, she did the same for 23 days and to the point of not even washing Her mouth with water.

Ma said, "Realising that use of water was being forgotten, this body once again started normally to bring a balance.'

Once, after abstaining from meals for six months, she resumed it to eat cooked rice and vegetables meant for 7-8 people.

In 1925, Bholanath's sister came to their place to spend Christmas holidays. Wishing to prepare *kheer* for Ma. She cooked 20 litres of milk for the dish. On that day Ma was supposed to be fasting. On Bholanath's request, Ma agreed and that lo and behold, she took all the *kheer* made of 20 litres of milk. *Kheer* was prepared again and Ma quickly finished that too.

On another occasion, Bhaiji (Late Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy), quietly supplied *ghee* and *maida* to serve Ma with *pooris* at mealtime. Accepting the food for a few days, Ma suddenly changed mind. On that day, she asked *pooris* to be made of the entire *maida* and ghee in stock. And in Her charismatic gesture, Ma ate all the *poories*—60 to 70 pieces—and said: "If this body eats this way daily all your money put together will prove insufficient. This body will not go on like this."

Didi used to say, "Ma would unconsciously eat everything including the skin and seeds of fruits unless foretold about."

Habitually, Ma hadan extremely simple and little diet. However, despite this, nobody has even found Her weak or weary.

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Ma remembered once that while in Kashi a tiny brass container with lid was bought. Bholanath would eat the rice cooked in the fire of Yagna at Shahbag while for Ma, Didima would put little rice dal and vegetable in that tiny container and drop it in the big utensil in which rice, for Bholanath and others were cooked. Ma would remain on fast the whole day. Only after dusk, she would take whatever she wished from that tiny container. This became a routine for several months.

(d) Sri Ma's Spiritual Initiation *(DIKSHA)* Bajitpur, 1922

Sri Ma, Herself recounted Her initiation ceremony on devotee's request. I may by pardoned by Sri Ma for any error in interpreting and writing about that solemn occasion.

This particular *leela* of Sri Ma is as incredible as it is astounding.

Diksha is a sacred ritual, requiring *Guru, Sisya* and *Ishta—Beej Mantra*. Here Ma alone is *Guru, Sisya* and *Ishta*.

Ma has emphatically mentioned that at no stage she was in need of a Guru or initiation, so what is the meaning of *diksha* to Her?

'He who is the Guru, is also the *shishya* (disciple).

On 3rd of August, 1922 (Jhulan Purnima or Rakhi Purnima) the spiritual initation of Sri Ma took place between 10-12 at night all by Herself. In Ma's words—

"On that special Jhulan Purnima day, this body was unusually placid since morning. After finishing all the day,s household chares this body sat in a corner of the bedroom at night fall for daily worship. *Asanas* and *mudras* started all by itself. Requirements for the Puja were not procured from outside. Rather they were brought out from within and arranged in order. Although nobody could have visualised this, there was no doubt of the offerings present. In between all these activities this body was a silent spectator, nothing was done intently.

"Try to visualise about Guru in the same way as God and Godesses appeared from this body during puja and faded back into the body after the rituals.

After the puja and lighting of the pious fire in brief took place, many rituals started spontaneously. Fingers automatically drawing a mystic design *(yantra)* on the floor. This body never before knew what is *yantra* and how to draw. The *yantra* thus drawn conformed to the requirements laid down in the scriptures.

Awakening of the *Beeja Mantra* took place within Herself and it welled out from Her lips leaving distinct visible impression in writing by Her fingers inside the *yantra* already drawn. In Ma's words:

"The ritualistic prayer was also done spontaneously of its own. Instead of repetition of name *(Naam) Beeja Mantra* now started. Slowly the fingers started

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responding to 'japa'. Puja in tune with japa was held non-stop. Several Gods and Godesses were worshipped. They would come out of this body and after the Puja was over, they will again go back inside the body. Specific requirements for specific pujas were offered. Even the *namaskar* used to be in a specific posture instantaneously. Prayers and *Mantras* were more distinctly pronounced than before."

So after the initiation, the spiritual exercises grew more intense.

Ma's maternal cousin Nishi Babu, who happened to be there, witnessing Her doing Puja and evening prayers in a different style, one day, asked Bholanath why did not latter object to Her japa like this when she was yet to be initiated.

When Ma over heard this comment, she sprang out of Her usual calm and shy composure, and retorted—

"What do you want to say?" Repeated she, "What do you want to say?"

Nishi Babu:	"How do you take these exercises? Have you been initiated ?"
Ma:	"Yes, I have been".
Nishi Bahu:	"Who are you?"
Ma:	"Purna Brahma Narayan".
Bholanath asked :	"Who are you?"
Ma:	"Maha Devi".

Later Ma explained the two different answers. 'Purna Brahma Narayan' came out first, but Ma being a lady they had-doubt. That is why Purna Brahma Narayani, Mahadevi etc. were pronounced later. There was a reason behind the pronouncement 'Mahadevi' At that time, the soul and body were in oneness for puja. That's why 'Mahadevi' was pronounced.

Nishi Babu said: What's the proof of you being Purna Brahma Narayan."

Instead of a clear answer a stream of *slokas* and *mantras* flowed eloquently from Ma's mouth. Ma asked Bholanath to be seated and then touched his *'Brahmatālu'* with Her right hand. The moment she touched him, Bhlanath uttered *"OM"* and went into a deep, self absorbed meditation. He remained in that state for hours together. Bholanath's nephew, Ashu, became visibly scared. Janaki Babu and others requested Ma to bring Bholanath back to his normal self. Ma touched Bholanath's *Brahmatālu* again and he returned to normalcy instantly. Bholanath said, he was during this period, in a state of Supreme Bliss.

Nishi Babu asked Ma again, whether Ramani Babu was initiated. Ma replied "No. Not yet. It will happen after five months," She predicted even the date, day and time to the utter disbelief of Nishi babu. It was difficult for Nishi babu to comprehend how did Ma, an illiterate village woman, know about calculation of

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time according to stars, movement. In fact, he knew little about this method and he confessed his ignorance to Her.

Ma asked him to contact Janaki babu who, she said, would now be fishing in the pond. This was another shock for Nishi Babu, as the pond was not close by, it was well out of sight from that place and secondly, Janaki Babu was supposed to be at his office during that time. But infact Janakibabu was there. When Nishibabu went to him and got the details about Ma's calculations of Ramani Babu's date of initiation, it was found correct.

(e) Bholanath's *DIKSHĀ*

When Bholanath heard about this, he decided not to take it on that day. He usually took his breakfast before going to office. On that fateful day, however, he left for office early without taking his breakfast, fearing to be held up on that pretext and compelled to take Diksha.

Meanwhile, the auspicious moment for the initiation ceremony was imminent. Ma sent somebody for Bholanath at his office, the collectorate. Bholanath first refused straightaway. But on second thought that Ma might Herself drop in, Bholanath preferred to return home.

Ma was taking a stroll at that time and *mantra* and *stotras* were being pronounced by Her. Ma asked Bholanath to bathe. When Bholanath came back after the bath and took his seat a *Beeja Mantra* came out of Sri Ma's lips. Bholanath on Ma's instruction brought his ear closer to Ma and he was told to repeat that *mantra.* In this manner, Bholanath's *diksha* took place at the time Ma ordained it, five months back.

In the annals of *Matri leela,* this was a unique example of *'Mantra diksha'*. The second example was that of Bhaiji's *diksha* with Sanyasa mantra on the banks of the holy Mansarovar near Mount Kailash in 1937.

[To continue]

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AFTER THE FIRST MEETING

—A European devotee

[Continued from before]

For the next 6 months I remained at Sri Ramanasramam, but once again by early July, 1973 I found I could at last go to meet her again. A couple of days before leaving for Kankhal - where I heard she would be for Guru Purnima - I had a dream that Ma would be in a place called "Rajgir". This seemed a strange name but I did find out that Ma had an ashram in Rajgir, near Varanasi; could this be the place?" Anyway I took the overnight mail flight to Delhi and was told that shared taxis could be hired near Kashmiri Gate. After waiting there a taxi became available and one of the other occupants was an old devotee of Sri Ma, Dr. Sen. The 5 hour journey passed quickly in the presence of the devotee. When we reached Kankhal we were soon ushered into Sri Ma's room for immediate darshan. This was unexpected to say the least, a result of being with this old devotee. We climbed the narrow stairs and there she was once more before me, a figure in spotless white, talking so sweetly to the people around. We took our leave and Dr Sen then offered to share a room with me and we visited several dharmasalas, but all were "full". He then told me they were "full" because they did not want to take a foreigner. This annoyed him but he was determined to find a place where we could both stay and we did find one near the Harki Pauri in Hardwar. It was enough - two string cots, a table and a "bath room", simply with a tap and bucket. The next day was Guru Purnima and being monsoon time it was cool and drizzling. Dr Sen kindly took me for a bath in the Ganga at the Harki Pauri and then we proceeded to Sri Ma's ashram in a cycle rickshaw. At that time only the old ashram buildings were there and I found one could sit in the courtyard under some upper floor rooms, which was where Ma stayed. So even though Ma was often not to be seen and one was waiting for hours, accompanied by a host of flies who sought refuge from the rain, actually one was very close to Sri Ma.

I found another quiet corner where I could sit undisturbed at the back of Didima's samadhi. On Guru Purnima day itself whilst there, I noticed that one of the ashramites came to sit nearby. Shortly after Sri Ma herself suddenly appeared and went to him holding a silver plate, which she wiped and then showed to him.

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Soon he himself got up and left. I later came to realise that the plate was a mantra plate and Sri Ma had given him some sort of *diksha* by showing the mantra to him.

Nothing much else stands out in my memory during the 5 days of her visit except that Atmananda sang bhajans so beautifully one evening.

My plan had been to follow Sri Ma for some weeks and there were two Americans also with the same idea. However Ma was not saying where she was going after Kankhal. Atmananda tried very hard to find out for us but after she repeatedly asked the question Ma told her very firmly to keep quiet. All Ma would say was "wait until you hear". On the morning of Sri Ma's departure somehow I had been able to sit quietly outside her room upstairs. Coming in my mind again and again, I know not from where, were the insistent words "You must go to Rajgir, you must go to Rajgir, you must go to Rajgir". Ma left in the afternoon and a group formed round her as she sat on a chair on the station platform and we could all do pranam.

And then she left and there was nothing one could do but wait, and for how long? It was not an easy time as I had very little money and I used to visit the ashram daily, (which was almost empty after Ma's departure), and sit next to Didima's samadhi. after a few days of this I almost bought a ticket for Rajgir, but remembering Ma's words ""wait until you hear", I could not bring myself to ignore her instructions. It later turned out that Ma had in fact gone to Rajgir and spent 3 quiet weeks in seclusion.

One of the Americans had remained in Kankhal also and at the end of 3 weeks we decided to go to Delhi so that we could travel more easily when news of Sri Ma's next move came. Soon it did-she was going to be in Ranchi, not too far from Rajgir, for Jhulan Purnima. We bought our rail tickets and then visited a Sufi saint, Rehana Tyabji (author of "Heart of a Gopi"), who was also very devoted to Sri Ma. We had an enjoyable talk with her in a darkened room. She gave sweets for Sri Ma. Then we went to the station. When we arrived we found to our great dismay that there was a rail strike and the railway staff were lying on the track to stop all trains. My heart sunk into my boots. The Americans had then decided to fly but I did not have enough money left for that. Had I now to go back South after waiting 3 weeks? Suddenly my woeful thoughts were disturbed by one of the Americans who offered to lend me money for the flight. Life became bright again and we made for Indian Airlines and were able to reserve flights for Ranchi on the next day.

We took off next morning and changed planes in Patna. The flight to Ranchi was on an ancient propeller plane, a Viscount. There was no air conditioning, and indeed no air, and for some reason the plane was waiting for at least 20 minutes on

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the runway in the August sun - full of passengers. I have never perspired so much in my life! I was totally drenched. After that little experience we soon reached Ranchi and made for Sri Ma's ashram. We were told she would be arriving in about an hour and a half. And she did. After all the waiting we were with her again.

Ma's ashram had arranged accommodation for us at the nearby Self Realisation Fellowship ashram of Sri Yogananda. The inmates there were very fond of Sri Ma, and would visit her every day and she would accord them great hospitality, and indeed visited their ashram on one occasion. We three foreigners were given a comfortable room there in that lovely ashram.

There was tremendous excitement as many Bengali devotees had come from nearby Calcutta. Ma sat in the Kali temple of the ashram and all the ladies were doing "Ulla", the peculiar sound in the throat, made only by Bengali ladies on auspicious occasions. Ma was encouraging them with gestures into almost a Bengali frenzy ! Within a day or so we three foreigners were given a message from Sri Ma, that we could come for meditation to her room at 11 am. We had not asked for this but it had been in my mind. When we went upstairs to her room on the roof we were asked by Swami Bhaskarananda to sit in front of her, and she said in English "Five minutes", meaning 5 minutes for each of us, total 15 minutes. I remember the Bengali pronunciation clearly. I then remembered how I had over-stayed my welcome in Poona; somehow Ma clearly did too! Whilst we were sitting before her my eyes were as it were being urged to open, but I kept them firmly closed. Later the others told me that they had opened their eyes and Ma had been looking at us in turn. When our time was up, we each had to pass right in front of Ma to leave, as the room was narrow. Ma's eyes were by then closed and I looked at the lids just before my face as I passed. Immediately her eye opened and we looked at each other. I remember her deep brown fathomless eyes.

Meanwhile I had taken some water to drink from the ashram tap, and it tasted so foul I spat it out almost immediately. I was told that in the monsoon season, with low water pressure, ground water with sewage etc quite often seeped back into the pipes. Anyway within a short time I had developed loose motions, a high temperature and splitting headache. I thought it might be typhoid. There was to be a late night program to celebrate Jhulan. Though I felt so ill I thought I would try to go, and sat near the back feeling miserable. Strangely enough at the end of the program I realised my fever and headache had left me. Still I went to the hospital and was prescribed Chloramphenicol, a powerful but weakening anti-typhoid drug, that is now banned.

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It was probably the next day and Ma was to visit the house of a devotee. I was specifically asked to go in advance to help decorate the place of darshan with flowers. The significance of this will be clear as I was away from the SRF ashram for several hours. I spent the whole afternoon picking beautiful flowers in the garden, and making the best I could of the task given, as flower arranging was not something I was used to. Then Sri Ma arrived, though I do not remember the details of her visit. When I returned to SRF I found our room empty, and one of the American friends was not to be seen. On enquiry I was told he had been in the room all afternoon with excruciating stomach pain, and had to be rushed to the local Mission Hospital. At first the hospital would not do anything without a guarantee of payment for his costs, and it was only after SRF agreed to this did they operate. It was none too soon because his appendix was on the point of bursting.

The next day I visited him in his room on the ground floor, accessed through the garden. He was very pale and had a drip in his arm. What now, for Ma was to leave in 3 days? News of this crisis had reached Ma and she came to visit him in the hospital. As I was looking after his needs (indeed it was only because of his loan that I was there and it was the least I could do) he asked me to prepare a little offering with nuts, fruit, flowers from the garden, in a little basket. It was ready just as she arrived and I did pranam to her, feeling a little pleased with myself. I was totally ignored as she went straight past to his room. Because of the presence of the other ashramites I could not see clearly but it seemed Ma blessed him by putting her hands on his head. Anyway by the next day he was so much stronger and was able to discharge himself a couple of days later, with stitches still in, to follow Ma to Delhi. He had been asking Ma to give him *diksha* for some time, and finally after his ordeal, this did take place at the Delhi ashram. Immediately after that he flew back to the US, still with his stitches in.

During the evenings a number of us found we could go up to the roof and watch Ma through one of the windows, chatting with other ashramites. On one occasion as we were watching Ma suddenly asked for the shutters to be closed. We thought she did not want us looking in and got up to go. Just then Pushpa came out and said "Mother only asked for the windows to be closed because of the smell from the kitchen". We happily returned to our places and watched a little later as the ashram girls had their arms down Ma's back under her cloth ferreting around, trying to take out a moth or insect that had got down inside.

The night before Ma left I was asleep in the SRF ashram and had a very vivid dream of Ma. I had frequent dreams of her over this period but I remember this so clearly as I immediately awoke to find the moon shining into my eyes through the

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window. I had been sitting in a boat at the Harki Pauri, though strangely the water was flowing up stream, and not in the usual direction. Ma got into the boat and asked me "Do you have an old gold ring?" When I said I did not, she said "You must get an old gold ring".

The next day I puzzled over this as the dream was still vividly in my mind. I thought it might be connected with the SRF as they recommend the wearing of certain metals. So I asked one of the swamis, and he suggested I speak to Ma. Thus I spoke to Mr K.P. Roy, who was very helpful to the foreigners and he agreed to take me to Ma and translate for me. Shortly before Ma's departure she was sitting outside so people could take their leave of her. I sat in front of her as indicated and waited for an opportunity. Ma's hands were right in front of my face and I watched them intently. They did not seem to have a physical substance, not solid, but concentrated energy. Finally I had my chance to relate the dream. Ma then asked me if I ever had a gold ring, and I recollected the signet ring given to me by my father. It had engraved on it the family emblem, a boar, like the symbol of Vishnu, and I had given it away to my flat mate before leaving England for my new life in India. "You must get it back", she said, "and if you do not you must write to me and I will tell you what you should do". Accordingly I sent a letter to the last known address (the flat we shared) asking my friend if he would kindly return it. About 3 or 4 weeks later an envelope arrived with a bulge in it. Inside was the ring wrapped in cotton wool, quite safe in spite of coming through the Indian post unregistered. The letter accompanying it said my friend was amazed that my letter ever reached him as he had moved from the flat some 2 years before and had then moved on again to another place. I still have the ring.

After another day I accompanied my American friend by plane to Delhi, as described above. Though he could move slowly he could not carry anything. We went to Sri Ma's ashram at Kalkaji and they arranged accommodation at the local college. By this time I was beginning to feel very ill and decided I should return to Sri Ramanasramam to recuperate. I was certainly not up to traveling by train and my American friend again came to my rescue with a loan. I had spoken to Swami Bhaskarananda and asked him if he could tell Ma I planned to leave.

However with so many jobs constantly in his hands it must have slipped his mind. During an afternoon darshan I was sitting at the back feeling so ill but in my mind was the thought that I could only wait as I did not want to leave without Ma's permission. Suddenly Sri Ma called Swamiji and whispered something to him. He immediately came over and said I could take leave. I went up to Ma to do pranam

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and she looked at me very sweetly but in a way that made me feel I was in for some trouble ahead.

I left to go to the airport, feeling even more ill and the sensation was that I had to hold on to stay awake or I would lose consciousness. When I reached the plane I felt worse still and everything was spinning in front of me. I had to ask to leave the plane and was taken to the airport doctor, who checked me over, gave me some pills and told me to rest. After some time I returned to the town centre and with my few remaining rupees found a hotel for the night. I believed that once I went to sleep I would never wake up! But though I tried I could sleep little and took the plane the next day, arriving in Madras with about Rs 20/-. Luckily there were friends there going to Tiruvannamalai the next day by car, and I was given a place for the night and a lift. It was as well because I was not up to traveling by bus. Recovery from this condition was a long process and I was not fit to go anywhere or even leave the ashram for 4 months.

(To be continued.)

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URGENT CIRCULAR

All those subscribers who have not yet paid their subscriptions for the next year are specially requested to send the same either by M.O. or Bank Draft latest by 15th December, 2005. No cheque will be accepted.

— Managing Editor
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SOME MEMORABLE EPISODES

—Anima Ganguly

My late husband Brig. Rasamay Ganguly and I were residents of Pune in the sixties. He was the Professor of Surgery at the Armed Forces Medical College. He had the privilege of operating on one of the sanyasis belonging to Ma's Ashram. After the sanyasi's successful recovery, Ma requested "The Doctor" to pay her a visit. We were very honoured and hastened to the Ashram. Our first audience with her moved us deeply.

Sri Ma used to visit her Ashram in Pune once a year and never failed to inform us about her arrival. We used to rush to obtain her darshan. On hearing of our arrival, she always used to invite us into her presence. Once she enquired whether we had performed the Sacred Thread ceremony for our son. On hearing that it had not been done, she set a date which happened to be just two days away. We spent a sleepless night wondering how the arrangements could be made so quickly. To our relief, the next morning we received a call from the Ashram advising us that we could hold the ceremony a year later. She also offered us the "Purohit" from her Ashram in Benares. We were thrilled to accept this offer since it was difficult to get a Bengali Priest in Pune.

A year later in the month of July, Sri Ma arrived in Pune a week before the ceremony for the inauguration of the Shiva temple at the Ashram. She was observing "Maun" (silence) during those days. Once our request to attend the sacred thread ceremony at our house was received by her, she smiled and pointed at the sky. It had been raining incessantly in Pune for the past week. The day of the ceremony, the sun shone brightly. The ceremony went off smoothly. Sri Ma attended and offered the first alms to the newly initiated Brahmin, my son. Word spread that Sri Ma was in our home, a crowd gathered to seek her blessing and she distributed *prasad* to everybody with her own hands.

In 1971, India was at war to liberate Bangladesh. Wounded soldiers filled the Army Hospitals. Sri Ma wanted to distribute *prasad* to the unfortunate soldiers lying critically wounded in the hospitals. They were fighting to liberate Her homeland and Her heart went out to them. She honoured us by using our car to make this trip to the hospital. My husband drove and I sat in the back with Her.

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Unfortunately on the way, the car suddenly stopped. Sri Ma eagerly got out of the car, crossed the road and entered the wooded area, next to the road where there happened to be a Shiva temple! She spent half an hour in the temple and when she returned, the car started and we proceeded to the hospital. At the hospital, she personally distributed *prasad* to the bed ridden patients.

I decided to take *diksha* from Ma soon after. In the morning of the auspicious day, my husband and I went to the Ashram with the required articles. My husband was in army uniform since he did not expect to take any part in the proceedings. Gurupriya Didi 'exclaimed how is it possible that I would be initiated but my husband would not'. Sri Ma calmly said that the work my husband was doing was already in the service of God and eventually his time would come. She advised me to prostrate before my husband to seek his blessings and permission to undertake this new path in my life. My husband finally became Her disciple several years later after his retirement from the Army.

There is another episode memorable in my life. Sri Ma was to depart from Pune, so we went to the Ashram to pay our respects. As we were reaching the Ashram, we saw Sri Ma in a convoy of cars departing from the Ashram. She waved to us to follow. Following Her we found ourselves at the gate of the National Defence Academy. Sri Ma tried to give the sentries at the gate some *prasad* but they could not accept it as they were on duty. At this point my husband intervened, requested permission from the Commandant and she was able to distribute the *prasad*. Thereafter we took her on a sightseeing trip inside the Academy which is very picturesque with its beautiful lake and lovely mountains and majestic buildings.

My husband's final *darshan* of Sri Ma happened to be on his visit to Vrindavan in 1980. Sri Ma was resting, so he was about to depart when suddenly she sent for him. She chided him for trying to leave without seeing her and requested him to examine her pulse since she was not feeling well.

Memories come flooding back as I remember my Ma.

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THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

— P.C. Mehta

[Continued from before]

Later Buddhistic schools:

We have briefly dealt with the two stages in the history of Buddhism. The later phase of Buddhism began from the first or second century A. D. The number of Buddhistic schools that arose in India were eighteen. However, we will refer only to four of them as they are the ones generally mentioned in Hindu and Jaina works and are significant to the development of Indian thought.

As we have seen, Buddha's teaching is pragmatic. Buddha laid stress only on what was necessary for overcoming evil. Due to sharp controversy that developed during this period between Buddhist and Hindu thought, there arose the need to defend and refute each point of view. As a result there sprang up an extraordinary theoretical development of Buddhist as well as Hindu doctrines. Several Buddhist works of this period got written in Sanskrit. All the shades of realistic and idealistic philosophical theories found place within Buddhism.

The views under later Buddhism are classifiable under the two realistic schools of *Hinayana*, which come under the common title *Sarvasti-vāda* and are called *Vaibhasika* and *Sautrantika,* and the two idealistic schools of *Mahayana* called *Yogacarā* and *Madhyamikā.*

As the word *Sarvasti* can be broken down to, *Sarva* meaning 'everything' and *Asti* meaning 'exists', the title itself suggests that this is the school which starts from the premise that everything exists. This is in contradistinction to another school of *'Sunya-vada'* or 'nihilism' which claims that nothing exists. *'Sunyavada* is represented in its mature form by the *Madhyamika* doctrine of *Mahayana* Buddhism' and will be discussed later

Sarvasti-vada

Under *Sarvasti-vada,* fall two schools called,

1) *Vaibhasika* and

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2) *Sautrantika.*

1) ***Vaibhasika :***

The chief exponents of the *Vaibhasika* school were Dinnaga (500 A.D.) and Dharmakirti. Dinnaga's works like *Pramana-samuccaya* are lost. Dharmakiriti who is earlier than Sankara, is an interpreter of Dinnaga. His work 'Nyaya-bindu' is a treatise on logic. A very important commentary on it is by Dharmottara. Hindu writers have cited numerous quotations from the works of these two thinkers.

2) ***Sautrantika* school :**

Kumaralabdha (200 A.D.) is the founder of the *Sautrantika* school. There is not much difference between the tenets of *Vaibhasika* and *Sautrantika* schools.

Both *Vaibhasika* as well as *Sautrantika* do not admit any distinction between substance and attribute, meaning that there is no substance as the base for the attribute to cling to. When we say that a thing is red, we attribute redness to an object. But there is no object of which anything may be predicted.

3) ***Sva-laksana* and *sāmānya-laksana* :**

There is only the sensation of redness which is *sva-laksana*. Common perceptual experience is true only so far as the *sva-laksana* is concerned. The *'Sva-lakshanas'*, which are the ultimate basis of external reality, may be taken to stand for the data of sense like 'color' or 'taste', only we should remember that the momentary sensation is, merely 'blue' or 'sweet' and not something that is qualified by 'blueness' or 'sweetness'. Each member of this series of momentary external reality though unique is but 'like itself i.e. having *'Sva-lakshana'*. The number of *sva-lakshanas*, which are the ultimate facts of the outer world, is infinite. This is the earlier stage of perception described as *nirvikalpa* or indeterminate. Here the mind is passive.

In the next stage, the mind becomes active and there takes place subjective elaboration of *svalaksana* leading to *savikalpa* or determinate perception. All the determinate conceptual elements called *sāmānya-laksana* are the universals which are superimposed by the mind and such superimposition is called *'kalpana'* through which reality is transformed when experienced. Thus the particular alone is real not the universal.

Vaibhasika holds that *sva-laksana* are directly perceived, while the *Sautrantika* maintain that they are known indirectly since according to the doctrine of momentariness, the same objects are not present when they are perceived. Therefore this so-called perception is more in the nature of *anumeya* or inference. *Vaibhasikas* refute the *Sautrantika* view that the *sva-laksanas* are known indirectly,

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on the ground that it contradicts experience and that if perception is abolished, there can be no inference.

Does the *Sautrantika's* contention that the objects are known indirectly mean that they are inferred ? That would be so only if the objects perceived have to be contemporaneous with the act of perception. 'They are known', means that they are perceived, not inferred, but this perception is sought to be made consistent with the doctrine of momentariness.

Only *Vaibhasika* school can be called pluralistic realism. It believes in the existence of an indefinite number of fleeting *sva-laksanas* and regards them as the basis of external world. They all are diverse with no principle of unity underlying them. Each *sva-laksana* is produced by the preceding one in its series and gives rise to the succeeding one, but it is otherwise absolutely independent and relation less.

Since these *sva-laksanas* are directly apprehended by the senses, they are the material of bare sensation. When perceived, they are always accompanied by *kalpana* or mental forms which are subjective determinations. These subjective determinations are divided into five classes which are : i) *'ati* or generality, ii) *guna* or quality, iii) *karma* or action, iv) *nama* or name and v) *dravya* or substance including relation to other substances. These are the categories of thought. Everything that appears to us appears through their medium. Thus perception includes much more than what is actually presented to the senses. Though imaginary, they are important for practical life. Time and space also are equally mental devices and no *sva-laksana* has either extension or duration. Time and space being relational, are included in the category of *dravya.*

The *sva-laksanas* are not ultimate, but secondary. They are constituted of certain primary elements which are *bhutas*. These *bhutas* are atoms which are not enduring entities (unlike in Jaina or Vaisesika doctrines). Thus the world conception of the *Vaibhasikas* may be called atomistic.

We have seen that Jainism regards such features whether universal or particulars as actually characterizing objects. Buddhist view is therefore quite different.

As regards the inner world of mind, a parallel classification is adopted with *citta* and *caitta* corresponding to *bhuta* and *bhautika*. Of the five *skandhas* i.e. I) *rupa-skandha* is the physical body, ii) *vijnana* is 'self-consciousness', iii) *'vedana'* is 'feeling', iv) *samjna* is 'perception' and v) *sanskara* is 'mental dispositions'. Of these the *vijnana-skandha* is *citta* and the other four are either *caitta* or derived from *'citta'*. The idea is that self-consciousness as a succession of momentary ideas is fundamental and the other psychical features are modifications. They depend not

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merely on outside factors, but also on the predispositions of the individual so that in mental life the past has a very important part to play in determining the present.

An obvious criticism of the *Vaibhasika* world-view is that a *sva-laksana* is as nothing and may be dispensed with.The doctrine however, so far as it retains belief in an external world, is more loyal to old teaching than the subjectivism of Yogacara. It also means that the investigation of objective reality was not pursued to its limit. An unsatisfactory trait of the doctrine is that after abolishing time and space, it tries to think of reality from an objective view-point. Its dimensionless *sva-laksanas* can have no verity about them.

The *Sautrantika* position is identical with *Vaibhasika*, except that instead of dogmatically asserting the existence of *sva-laksana*, it only admits them as a hypothesis to account for experience.

This doctrine of *Sarvasti-vāda,* accepts the validity of both, i) the external objects as well as ii) the self. It does not deny either. It is therefore considered realistic.

However as noted under the doctrine of *Nairātmaya* or 'The doctrine of non-substantiality' of things, or the doctrine of *Anātta* (*Anātmatā* in Sanskrit) i.e. absence of any eternal self everything i.e. both the self and the external reality were considered *Samghata* i.e. 'an aggregate' of their respective components.

This view gets modified in accordance with the hypothesis of momentariness, with the result that both the external reality and the self lasts no longer than an instant. Everything continues only as a series.

It is the similarity of its several members, that gives rise to the illusion of sameness or identity in our minds. In other words, there are modifications but nothing that endures through them. Therefore there is no identity, but only an illusion of identity.

This view is different from the view under Jainism, which as we saw acknowledges both similarity as well as identity. We have seen that Jainism accepts identity or *Sadrasya* as a new kind of knowledge.

Since Buddhism repudiates any enduring substance, the self is only a continuous stream of ideas or a constantly transforming psychological center through which one acts. Enlightenment is not a momentary flash but a gradual process.

[To continue]

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OUR MEMORABLE DAYS AT MODINAGAR

— Shraddha Davenport

The train arrived in Delhi on time at 10:30 a.m. and we went to our usual hotel. Both of us were feeling peculiar and out of touch with our surroundings. We were in a sort of shock from suddenly leaving Mother's presence and the intensely high atmosphere of the mela, then dropping abruptly into the cold material vibration of worldly life. It was a great blessing that we had a few more days before returning to the west, as the contrast would have been too much to endure.

We ate in our room and rested most of the day. It seemed that I was always packing or repacking. That evening was no different. We would have only three days in Modinagar and were taking just enough for that short stay. Our flight from India was out of Delhi, so we left the rest of our luggage in storage at the hotel pending our return.

The next morning we ran a few errands, then hired a very nice car to take us to Modinagar. There at Modi Bhavan, a complex across from the magnificent Modi Mandir, we found that we were expected at the Gaylord Guest House. Our driver was told how to find the place and he took us to the north end of town where it was situated. Only in India could one leave an austere little grass hut and next be housed in the pampered comfort of a "Gaylord Guest House".

The room which we were given was very large, carpeted, and furnished as a suite. It had a dining table and chairs at the far end, a couch and coffee table, a desk, vanity, closets, and two double beds. The bathroom was white tiled with all ceramic fixtures. There was even one frigerator ! Downstairs we found a small restaurant that would serve us either there or in our quarters. After putting our things in the room, we went by rickshaw to Modi Mandir in search of Mother.

Modi Mandir is the same beautiful red temple which is described in our 1972 trip. It was with great joy that we once again came to that holy place where Sri Hanumanji lives. All of the gorgeous images in that temple are alive, but I must admit that Hanumanji with great moist eyes had claimed me when first I had His darshan.

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The Bhagavat Saptaha was conducted by Sri Swami Vishnu ashram of Suktal. It was held near the temple in a building that was like a large room unto itself. Many people had filled the room, but Mother was clearly visible from the doorway. When we arrived and pronamed to Her from the door, She smiled at us and held us with Her wonderful eyes for a very long time. As we stood before Her during the ensuing one hour, she frequently graced us with Her loving look. We basked in the joy of her nearness, smiling at our shared good fortune.

After the Swamiji concluded his talk, the people stood and began to leave the building. We were delighted to see Swami Keshvanandaji among them. He chuckled as he said that our wish brought him there. Upon leaving Allahabad, at the last minute a ride became available and he was told to come. By Mother's grace we could enjoy his company on these last few days.

As we moved away from the building and through a pandal we met our friend Lakshmi whom we had last seen before the Kumbha Mela. She and her daughter, Gopalpriya, had recently arrived in Modinagar.

Mother was coming out of the building, and as She walked past us we stepped behind Her, following as She went to an awaiting car. From the temple grounds Mother went to Krishna Ashram where She would give a brief darshan. We took rickshaws to join Her there.

Krishna Ashram was like a graceful estate. Upon entering the gate, we followed a private road through surrounding orchards to a secluded spot where a house was nestled amid flowers and a green lawn. A small pandal was erected beside the house. This was not an ordinary house, but its construction was as such. The Modi family had provided this lovely spot for Mother's use during Her visit.

Dasu greeted us as we arrived. He gave us prasad from a basket of fruits which he held. Inside the front door we found a large carpeted room with a marble fireplace against the far wall. There were curved sectional sofas and in the middle of the room was a raised platform for Mother's asana. There were only a few people there and we sat upon the carpet near Mother as one lady sang for Her. Swami Keshvanandaji called for Satya to sit by him and Mother gave me another of Her sweet smiles as She looked tenderly into my eyes.

After sitting with Mother for a short time, we were asked to step outside as two privates had been scheduled with Mother. When we went to pronam before

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Mother, She looked at us as though She was really glad to see us and said something to us twice which I could not understand. Nirvananandaji was near and I asked him what Mother had said. Without replying he handed an orange and a guava to Mother which She gave to us. As Satya pronamed, Mother looked at him with a very sweet and tender smile. We stood outside the screen door, looking in at Mother.

Before we left that day we were treated to a rare sight: Mother alone. She arose from Her seat, walked across the room, opened a door, and entered another room. It was so nice to see Her in such a peaceful environment.

We were told that the daily program began at 9.00 a.m. with a Bhagavat discourse, and then at about 11:30 a.m. there would be darshan at Krishna Ashram. In the evening Bhagavat was at 4:00 p.m. and darshan about 5:30 p.m.

That evening we enjoyed hot baths, a snack of cheese toast, and good night's sleep. The nights were quite cold, but daytime was very pleasant.

The following morning we arrived at the mandir at 8:50 a.m., but Mother did not come until about 9:45 a.m. We sat with Her until 11:00 a.m. then went to Krishna Ashram for darshan.

There were some things which we wished for Mother to bless. I had brought those things with me that morning and the time was perfect. Bhaskaranandaji called for us to come and sit before Mother. He kindly translated for us. First Mother blessed our japa malas, then we each gave her a new tulsi mala. The shell garlands which Satya had dipped in the river at Kumbha Mela received Her touch. She smiled as She held them. Gadadhar had given some tulsi seeds to me and I asked Mother to bless them that they might grow. She held them in Her tiny fingers.

One friend in America had asked for an asana and a silk shawl. I asked that Mother place Her feet upon the asana. She not only touched it with Her feet, but scooted them all over it until I became hard pressed to think of parting with it! Of course I did give it, along with the shawl which Bhaskaranandaji had so nicely laid upon Mother's shoulders. She also held a beautiful sandalwood Narayana murti which we had purchased in Varanasi. Mother looked him over carefully and exclaimed, "Bahot accha" (very good). She smiled, then touched him to Her heart, head, and eyes, Now he was truly beautiful.

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Mother gave prasad to all of us there, then She stood and left the room as we pronamed.

Two young people who were from an ashram in California had arrived.They were called Krishnapriya (the same name as our Swiss Friend) and Ashok. They had come to meet Mother for the first time. We had a nice lunch and visit with those two at Gaylord Guest House, then we all returned to Krishna Ashram to see Mother. She was seated with the Modi family members and young children around Her. Mother was very animated and it was a joy to watch.

Brahmachari Nirmalanandaji had just arrived from Delhi, and after a long talk with Mother about pollution and the purification of sacrifice, he sat near Mother's feet. We were sittng very near to him. Satya was very quiet and in a sad mood. Mother had noticed Satya and spoke to Nirmalananda in Bengali ("so that everyone would not understood." he later told Satya) saying, "Satya looks so sad, why?"

Two jolly sadhus had arrived and took Mother's attention for the moment, so Nirmalanandaji was able to tell Satya what She had asked. Satya told him that he was sad because we had only one more day with Mother, then we had to go back to the United States. It was something we did not like to face and wished that we could have stayed near Her forever.

Mother and the two sadhus had everyone in the room laughing. It was great fun to see Her so playful. When the sadhus left, Mother went into an adjoining room and some devotees followed for a private.

As we visited with people there, a young man stepped near where I stood and said, "Excuse me." I did not recognize Bhaskaranandaji's nephew, Kamal, until he smiled. In the two years since last we had met, he had gone from boy to youngman. We all laughed that I had not recognized him, then I heard about the trick he and Bhaskrananda had pulled on Satya. Bhaskaranandaji had said to Satya, "You have room for another person where you stay?" Satya wondered what was happening, but said, "Yes. "Then Bhaskrananda said, "Well, This young man will stay with you. "Satya thought, "Oh my God! What is he saying, who is this stranger?" then Kamal smiled and Satya recognized him and had a good laugh at Bhaskarananda's sense of humor. We were delighted to see Kamal and enjoyed having his company in our large suite.

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Nirvananandaji had arranged for us to have a private with Mother the next day and came to tell us that it would be in the evening. Our host, whom we only knew as Mr. Modi, had invited us to take tea at his lovely home. We enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and visited with his beautiful daughter who served tea and sweet to us. After a comfortable ride to our quarters in our host's car, we met Kamal who joined us for dinner. He then spent the night sleeping on the large couch in our room.

In the morning we went to the temple. Mother was inside where puja was done on this last day and fire sacrifice would be performed afterward. Satya and I took that opportunity to have darshan of the magnificent Hanumanji. There was not much light, but I managed to get one photo of Him. When we saw Mother as She accompanied the family to witness the fire sacrifice. After that rite was completed, Mother was driven to Krishna Ashram and we followed in rickshaws. She sat with us and talked with some people who had just come. Then She said that we would have our private. We did not expect it to be then as we had been told it would be in the evening, but with Mother the unexpected is the norm and truly exciting if a little unnerving at times.

Bhaskaranandaji and Nirvananandaji stayed to interpret as everyone else left the room. It was one of those times when the questions and answers did not quite mesh. But most of our important questions had already been answered by Mother. At one point She spontaneously told us, "Try to speak only the truth, speak of spiritual things only, and not of things. "Who can live up to those standards? We can only try, then pray for Her grace.

We went for our noon meal and visited with friends until time to rejoin Mother.

I took our little Gopal, and when we entered Krishna Ashram I sat Him by Mother's seat. A man came to arrange Mother's pillows and placed one in front of Gopal, He started to move Gopal, but Nirvananandaji told him not to touch Gopal. He told the man to move the pillow instead, saying, "Small Gopal cannot see over the big pillow to see Ma."

Mother came and took Her seat. She talked with some of the family members and others who had just arrived. We had a long lovely darshan. Mother spoke of how blessed the people were who had been at the Kumbha Mela. One man asked Mother how he could get the blessing of Kumbha Mela though he had not been there. Mother told someone to bring some of the Mela water. A clay cup of that

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water was brought to Her and Mother sprinkled that man. Then She sprinkled all of us. I asked Her to please sprinkle Gopalji too, but She did not hear me. So Nirvanananda told Her and She looked at Gopal for the first time that evening. She sprinkled Him and everyone laughed. Nirvanandaji looked at Gopal very lovingly and Mother did also. Then She picked Him up and touched Him to Her heart, head, and eyes, showering him with Her grace. She gave us prasad and blessed us by touching us on top of our heads.

That evening I had my bath in the holy waters of Kumbha Mela but most important to me was that it came directly from Her hand.

Soon we had to go outside as someone was there for a private with Mother. We stood on the porch and gazed at Mother through the screen door until She finished the private and then left the room.

We asked Nirvananandaji if we could come in the morning to see mother before we had to leave. He told that Mother said for us to come at 10:00 a.m. I asked if that was darshan time and he said no, it was just for us.

Swami Keshavanandaji was in front of the building and we had a last visit with him before going to our room to pack things for our morning departure.

When we awoke, we finished putting our luggage together and went to see Mother by 9:50 a.m. One lady there said that Mother had been asking about us. Soon She called for us to come into the small room where She sat. Pushpa was the only one with Her and she interpreted for us. When we bowed, Mother gave us each a little yellow towel, some roses, a few sweets, and the two hibiscus blossoms which we had brought for Her. We started to place our heads next to Her knees and She smiled and made a little sound like "Tucka-Tucka-Tucka," which seemed to mean "Wait just a minute. "Pushpa laid a towel over Mother's lap and then we were allowed to put our heads there and she patted them.

Tears ran down my face as I asked Mother to bless us that we might return soon. I said, "I love you. "She looked at us so sweetly and said, "Send word when you arrive safely. "Moving reluctantly into other room, we stood looking back at Her until the door was closed.

Our taxi, with luggage pilled high upon the roof, carried Kamal, Ashok, Krishnapriya and us to our hotel in Delhi.

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Mother would be taking a train out of Delhi that evening, going to Varanasi. After our meal we went with the two young people to the train station for one last darshan. As our taxi moved through the crowded Delhi streets. Krishnapriya said, "Oh look, there is Swamiji....Oh Ma!" We looked, and a car that was right along side us sat Mother with Bhaskarananda, Nirvanananda, and Udas. Mother was laughing and greeting us with folded hands. The others laughed and greeted us as we all pronamed and laughed at our sweet fortune—a shining jewel to brighten our melancholy mood.

At the station Mother sat for some time in a chair on the platform. There was great crowd pushing to see Her. Then She went inside the train to Her compartment.

We said good-bye to Swami Keshavananda, Bhaskarananda, Nirvanananda, and Dasu.

Just as the train was rolling away, we were granted one last glimpse of Mother and pronamed as we stood there watching the train carry Her from our sight.

Feeling the emptiness that is always left where once She stood, we did not move right away. Then slowly, as if in a dream, we did what had to be done and returned to the other side of the earth.

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REMINISCENCES OF A VISIT TO MA'S ASHRAM

— Dr. Rakesh Kumar

It is not easy to know and understand every aspect of the personality of Ma Anandamayee. It is beyond our reach to comprehend what she stands for and what she is in reality, People often think about her as an *Avatar* or incarnation of God or Goddess. But it is always a matter of great pleasure to know something about Ma Anandamayee through discussion, reading, writing and worshipping.

First of all, I would like to thank Prof. (Dr.) Bireshwar Ganguly, who has inspired me to know about the Mother through his book - "Vedanta from Sri Krishna to Ma Anandamayee". In his book, he has portrayed different facets and discussed several aspects of Her life, personality and some playful roles. His elaborate discussion proved to be helpful in many ways. Indeed, after going through his book, I was inspired to know more and more about Her. It is not an artificial reaction, rather it is natural and spontaneous one. Consequently, to satisfy my urge, I had a telephonic talk with a devotee of Mother in Rajgir ashram. Thereafter, I visited Rajgir with the purpose to satisfy my curiosity and to have some more discussion and also to purchase some books and other literatures available there. I did not feel any problem to locate the Ashram as I was accompanied by one of my teachers Prof. Narendra Kr. Dar, who is also an ardent admirer of Ma Anandamayee. As he has already visited the place several times, he had close association with almost all the devotees of the Ashram. I stayed there about three to four hours having elaborate discussion about Mother.

I reached my place at about seven o'clock in the evening. I felt very much tired because it was a journey on a full summer day. After taking a rest for a short while, I took my dinner. I tried to read atleast the preface of the books I had purchased from the ashram but I was so overwhelmed by the personality of Mother that I went through the book in only two sittings, though I am not in the habit of continuing my study till late in the night. So, it was very surprising and amazing fact not only for me but for all the members of the family. Thus, I finished my reading through the available materials within a few hours. But still I could not satisfy my urge completely. At that moment of time, I realized the importance of the saying of Ma. "Hari Kathā hi Kathā aur sab Vritthā Vyāthā". (To talk of God alone is worthwhile, all else is in vain and leads to pain).

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Such readings apart, I had to go through other books also. So, I was in search of such opportunities so that I might be able to purchase some more books and spent some more time with ardent devotees of Ma. Fortunately, I got a call letter from the U.P. Government to appear at a test examination and the centre for which was in Varanasi. It was very much amusing and interesting for me to have such a good opportunity. I have already heard about the Ashram there. So I made up my mind to visit the Ashram at Varanasi during my trip over there.

My scheduled trip to Varanasi was on 8th June by the Shramjivee express from Bihar Sharif and reached Varanasi in time. I used to stay there usually in a hotel or guest house nearby the Jn. But that day I could not do so. I enquired about the place where the Ashram is situated. The place is atleast 4/5 kms away from the Jn. After a short while, I decided to go to Durga Kund which was somewhat familiar name for me. And from there, I went to Bhadaini on foot. I had already had a talk with Swami Nityanandaji during the course of enquiry about the Ashram. Thus, I reached there with the help of local people. I reached at the gate of Mata Anandamayee Hospital and again asked for the whereabout of the Ashram. After passing through a narrow lane I reached there in the Ashram and sent the message of my arrival to Swami Nityanandaji with the help of the gate-keeper. I met Swami Sri Nityananda, who was perhaps taking rest. After having a glance at me and after a brief introduction he called me inside the chamber. I took my seat and explained every thing to him. I had to purchase some books on Ma Anandamayee. Unfortunately, the in-charge of the publication division was not there. Sri Panu Brahmachari, the Managing Editor of Amrit Varta, was also not available. It was, therefore, a tedious task for Utpal da to help me to a great extent. However, he tried his best and showed me some books and booklets and asked me to select among those. I selected three or four books, paid the amount but could not get the cash-memo. Sri Utpal da told me that if you need the same you will be able to get that tomorrow.

In the course of discussion, I asked him about my stay in the Ashram's Guest House. After getting permission from Swami Sri Nityananda, he made arrangements for my stay there in the aforesaid Guest House. The guest house is situated nearby the Mata Anandamayee hospital and at some distance from the Ashram's main building.

Thereafter, I went to the market with Sri Utpal da to purchase some fruits for Ashram's puja and some articles for the Kanyapith, which is one of the main and integral part of the Ashram. The whole discussion would remain incomplete if I do not put the reference to an interesting episode that happened in the market place.

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There was too much rush in the market as it was time for shopping for the local people. Sri Utpalda purchased three kgs of mangoes from the nearby shop. Both of us left the place without taking the bag of mangoes. He hired a rickshaw and went near Lanka where the fruits in abundance were available. He gave the list of items to me and asked to say one by one and write down the price of each of the item. I did so. When we were about to move from the place, he counted the number of items purchased. But the bag containing mangoes was not there with him. It puzzled both of us. He asked the shopkeepers and fruit vendors one by one the about the bag. He did not get satisfactory answer. Sri Utpalda was quite puzzled and more nervous than me. We came back to the previous spot from where we purchased mangoes. Surprisingly, the bag was lying there in the shop untouched even after an hour. Our joy knew no bounds. He thanked the fruit vendor. Amid such interesting and amusing situations, we both returned back from the market.

In the evening, we sat there in Matri Mandir for *dhyān* and Japa. In the course of dhyān japa, I was chanting various prayer songs and mantras. The most common and popular among them was :

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव
त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव ।
त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव
त्वमेव सर्वं मम देवदेव ॥

The next sloka that I was remembering —

विद्या ददाति विनयं विनयां ददाति पात्रताम् ।
पात्रत्वात् धनमाप्नोति, धनात् धर्मः ततः सुखम् ॥

Another song that I was singing :

हरे मुरारे मधुकैटभारे
गोपाल, गोविन्द, मुकुन्द, सौरे ।

For a long time these sweet tunes came floating into my ears.

Thus I spent one and half hour over there in chanting and singing the holy songs and prayer couplet of Ma Anandamayee. Thereafter, I took my dinner in Ashram and went to the guest house. On the way to the guest house, I remembered the advice of Utpalda and thereby I went to purchase a candle and a match. It was very much amazing and astonishing for me when the shopkeeper told me that I was staying in the Ashram guest house. At this, I became so much puzzled and nervous that I could not ask any further question. It was really very intriguing for me that

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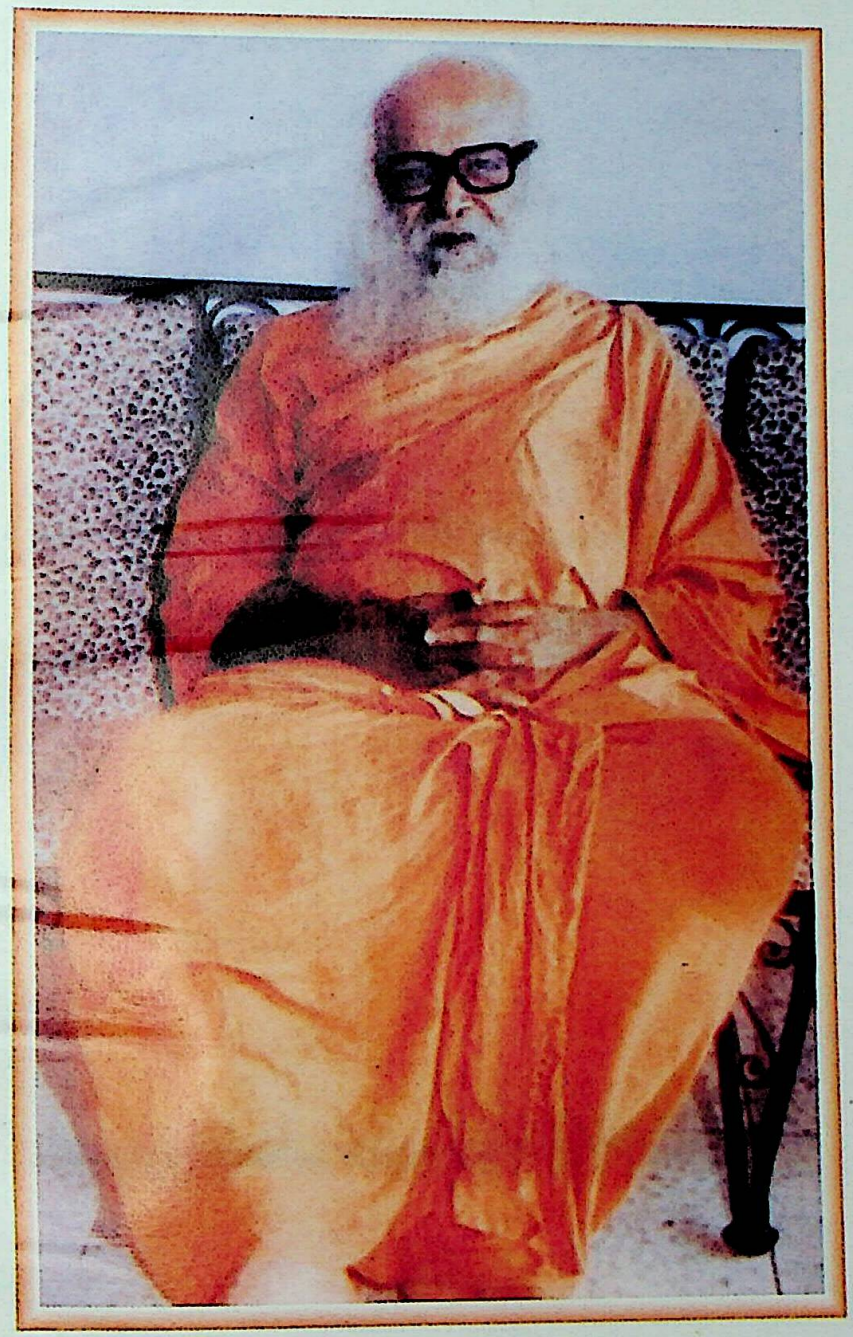

Sri Virajanandaji Maharaj

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how he came to know about this. Any way, I returned from there to the guest house. I felt somewhat lonely in the absence of any fellow being, and, it was a challenge before me to stay atleast one night over there. I could not have a sound sleep the whole night and remained aleart allthrough. Thus, I spent the whole night restless .

Next day, I went out for the morning walk. I returned after getting information about the whereabouts of the place where I had to go. I took my bath and got ready to move towards the Mandir. I wanted to narrate the whole experiences to Swamiji but could not do so. When I became face to face, I could not utter even a single word. I went towards the Matri Mandir for darshan and sat there for a few minutes. After getting free from puja and dhyana, I took *prasad* and moved away from there.

Now, it was time for parting. I took permission from Swamiji and departed from there. I went straight to the Varanasi Railway Station. After waiting for atleast two hours, I caught the train and returned to my place ruminating the entire happenings during my visit to Ma Anandamayee Ashram in Varanasi and my joyful company of Utpal da, an ardent devotee of Ma Anandamayee.

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IN MEMORIAM
Sri Virajanandaji Maharaj

—Sri S.C. Banerjee

The senior-most sadhu of the "Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha", Sri Virajanandaji Maharaj expired on 1st Augusta 2005 at 6.25 PM at Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Kankhal. At the time of his demise his age was nearly 102.

Before joining the Ashram, Virajanandaji Maharaj was known as Shri Kamal Bhattacharya. He belonged to a place named Vikrampur within the district of Dhaka in Bangladesh. He was an engineer in the Tata Industries. For the first time he came in contact with Shree Shree Ma in 1925 at Dhaka and since then he was maintaining regular contacts with Ma. He left his home and joined the Ashram of Shree Shree Ma in 1942.

His aged mother came to Ma at Varanasi in order to take back her son from the Ashram. Shree Shree Ma allowed her to do so, but Virajanandaji did not like that proposal and prayed to Ma to retain him in the Ashram. One day his aged mother unfortunately injured an infant mouse while sweeping the floor and ultimately that mouse died. The simple lady was very much shocked due to that incident. She felt necessary to show repentance towards the Almighty so that she need not loose her own son Kamal (Virajananda) and accordingly she took her son to Kashi Vishwanath Temple and offered him at the lotus feet of Baba Vishwanath forever. In this way, Virajanandaji Maharaj need not return back home and he could continue in the ashram. However, Shree Shree Ma did not dishearten the aged mother and She retained her in the Ashram so that she may get company of her son. The pious old lady passed away after a few years at Kashi Ashram itself.

After establishment of the Shree Shree Anandmayee Sangha in 1950, Virajanandaji was offered an important portfolio for the management of the Sangha considering his extra-ordinary working capabilities. His working was very much appreciated for the success of the functions at Varanasi Ashram, like elaborate Gayatri Mahayajna and the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Shree Shree Ma there. After serving the Sangha for more than eight years he requested Shree Shree Ma to relinquish him from the work. Ma accepted his prayer and helped him adequately to gain religious knowledge and perform meditation at suitable places for his spiritual

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advancement. Accordingly, he practiced meditation for a long time at Rajgir and at other important meditation places on the bank of the sacred river Narmada in Gujarat.

Once he was proceeding along the bank of the river Narmada towards the confluence of the river and the Arabian Sea. At a very lonely place, suddenly a lady appeared at a distance and she pointed him out the existence of a dangerous sandy swamp in front of him and signalled him to keep away from that place. Thus he was saved from getting lost within that sandy swamp. Later on, Shree Shree Ma indicated that Ma Narmada herself came in disguise to save his life in this way.

While residing at Rajgir, Virajanandaji used to go almost everyday to meditate at the place on the hilltop where Gautam Buddha used to meditate. One day he became late for return journey and he was on the way even after sunset. When he reached at a curve of the hilly road, suddenly he found a big tiger in front of him. He stopped immediately and prayed to Ma. When the tiger was about to attack him, right at that moment suddenly a truck arrived at that spot with its headlight on. Hurriedly Virajanandaji boarded the truck and saved himself from that tiger. After about a year, Ma came to Rajgir. One day while she was going with Virajanandaji by car and reached that spot, she asked the driver to stop the car there and enquired from Virajanandaji whether that was the spot where he had to face the tiger. Virajanandaji was very much surprised and could realise that nothing could be unknown to Shree Shree Ma. He could also realise that he was saved from the attack of the tiger on that day by the grace of Ma only. Virajanandaji had many such experiences in his spiritual life.

After joining Ma's Ashram, he regularly used to note down the spiritual talks of Shree Shree Ma in his diary. In this way he was collecting Ma's 'Vani' (spiritual talks) for pretty long time. During discussion on certain religious matters with the renowned learned philosopher and saint, Mahamahopadhaya Pd. Gopi Nath Kaviraj he gave him one of his diaries for his reference. Kaviraj Ji was very much impressed and got attracted with the words of Shree Shree Ma, seeing uncommon nobility in Her words. He showed his eagerness to publish those spiritual talks of Ma and he himself wrote the explanations of those parts, which were difficult to be understood by any common person. Thus, the words of Ma alongwith explanations given by Kavirajji were regularly published in sequence in the quarterly journal 'Ananda Varta,' which used to be published by the Sangha at that time. Later on, Sri Virajanandaji compiled all such articles and published the book 'Amar Vani' which was very much appreciated every where.

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Afterwards receiving inspiration from Shree Shree Ma, he published the most valuable book *'Swakriya Swarasāmrita'* in six volumes in Bengali language. Those books were published as per *kheyal* of Shree Shree Ma and She called them as *'Parama Bhāgawat'*. Shree Shree Ma Herself dictated contents of every topic of that book. Thus it was Ma's self-creation in self oriented language with Her fluent flow of words. When Virajanandaji was told that the words of Shree Shree Ma were not easily graspable, he told that the capability to understand Ma's words would depend on advancement in *sadhand* (devotion). As a person would gain more and more spiritual advancement, inherent divine meaning in Ma's language would be revealed to him accordingly. Virajanandaji also said that Shree Shree Ma disclosed many secret aspects of divinity in that book, which would not be seen in any of the religious books or just touched those aspects only. Some of the volumes have also been published in Hindi and English languages.

While writing the book *Swakriya Swarasāmrita,* he regularly got the opportunity to get company of Shree Shree Ma in seclusion for long periods. He said that Shree Shree Ma Herself was the vital root of all spirituality in this world. She had a complete divine experience of all those religions which were created in the past since eternity or those which are presently being followed and also those religions which would be created in future. We never heard about such unique experience attained by any one in the past. Virajanandaji also translated precisely each volume of *'Swakriya Swarasāmrita'* in English language. Translation of the sixth volume was his last writing, which is under publication.

Virajanandaji was extremely faithful to religious norms and he used to cook his meals himself all throughout. However, he could not continue it during last few years of his life when he became almost blind. At that time he surrendered himself completely to Ma and always used to feel the presence of Shree Shree Ma. His unflinching faith and commitment to the ideals and teachings of Ma have left a great lesson for others to follow. Although Virajanandaji Maharaj is no more with us but he will always be remembered through his publications, *'Amar Vani'* and *'Swakriya Swarasāmrita.*

JAI MA

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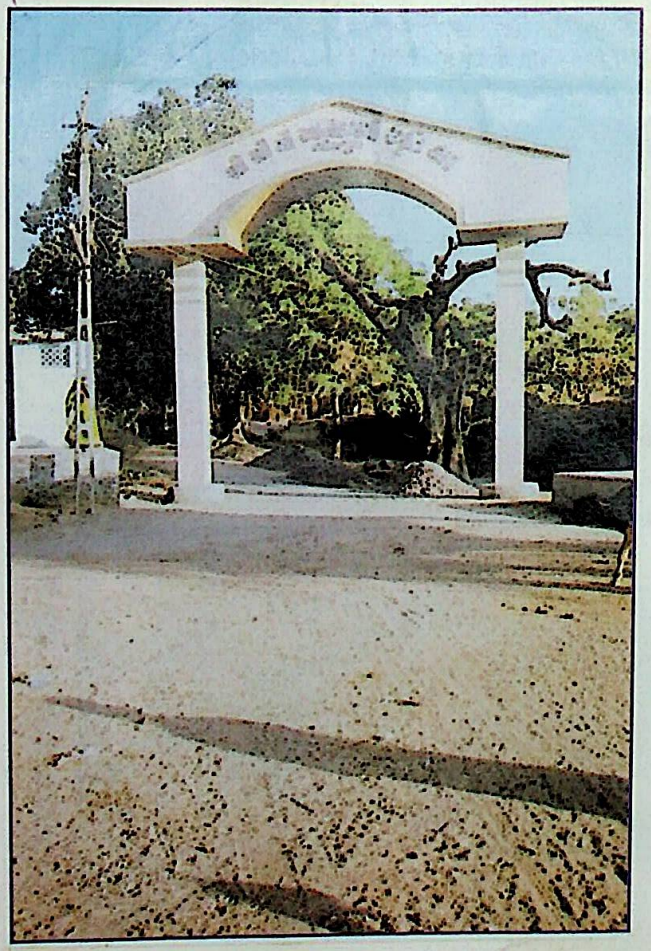
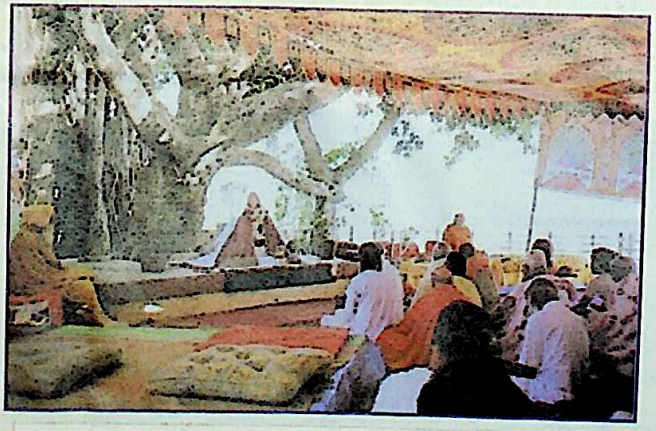


New Memorial Gate, Bhimpura Ashram



6th Samyam Saptaha, Bhimpura Ashram

Sadhana Kutir, Bhimpura Ashram

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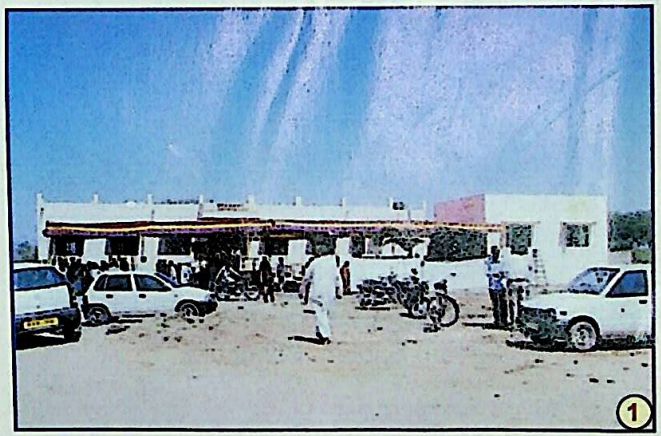
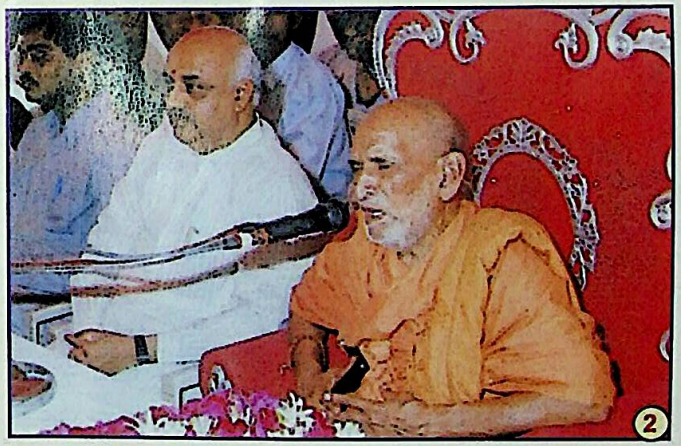
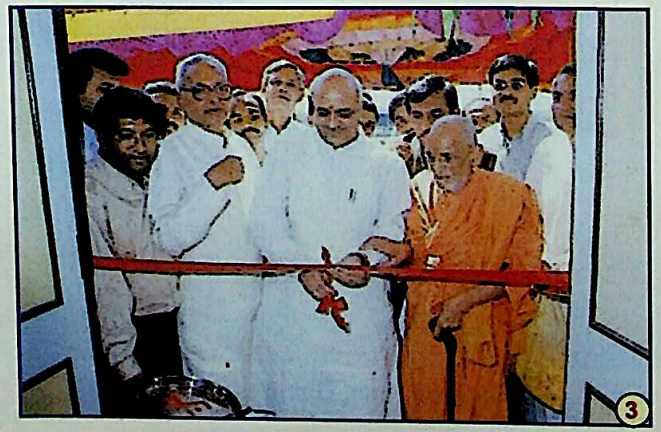
(1) Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee Primary Health Centre, Dedadra, Distt. Surendranagar, Gujarat

(2, 3, 4) Inauguration of Primary Health Centre by Sw. Bhaskaranandji & Hon. Min. I.K. Jadeja (Health)







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✿ Branch Ashrams ✿

14. NEW DELHI : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019 (Tel : 011-26826813)

15. PUNE : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Ganesh Khind Road, Pune-411007, (Tel : 020-25537835 & 25538903)

16. PURI : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Swargadwar, Puri-752001, Orissa. (Tel : 06752-223258)

17. RAJGIR : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, P.O.Rajgir, Nalanda-803116, Bihar (Tel : 06112-255362)

18. RANCHI : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Main Road,P.O. Ranchi- 834001 (Tel : 0651-2331181)

19. TARAPEETH : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, P.O. Chandipur-Tarapeeth, Birbhum-731233,

20. UTTARKASHI : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Kali Mandir, P.O. Uttarkashi-249193,

21. VARANASI : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Bhadaini, Varanasi-221001, U.P. (Tel : 0542-2310054+2311794)

22. VINDHYACHAL : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Ashtabhuja Hill, P.O. Vindhyachal, Mirzapur-231307, (Tel : 05442-242343)

23. VRINDABAN : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, P.O. Vrindaban, Mathura-281121 U.P. (Tel: 0565-2442024)

*

IN BANGLADESH :

1. DHAKA : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, 14, Siddheshwari Lane, Dhaka- 17 (Tel _ 0880-9356594)

2. KHEORA : Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, P.O. Kheora, Via-Kasba, Brahmanbaria.

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